EXQUISITE COMMONS

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ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

EXQUISITE COMMONS

by SOC 2025 Cohort

ISSUES is the annual, peer-led publication that serves as the milestone public offering for each School of Commons (SoC) program cycle.

ISSUES collates and contextualises the processes, practices, and methodologies of each participating project within SoC. Each project is invited to contribute to ISSUES in a form and style that is both reflective of, and complementary to, their own ways and workings. As such, experimentation and the re-working of traditional publishing modes are always encouraged.

Moreover, for each edition of ISSUES, the SoC Cohort collaboratively develops a collective framing that brings together the thematic threads and working methods they have both individually and collectively explored and developed during their 10-month peer-learning journey.

Each Edition of ISSUES is also typically coupled with a Collective Editorial developed by the SoC team in collaboration with the Cohort which adds further layers of contextualisation to the programme and outputs of each SoC offering.

However, for the 2025 edition of ISSUES, the SoC Cohort brought their theme of 'Exquisite Commons' to life by taking the foundations of the ISSUES structure and bringing it into an entirely new process of self-organisation. This evolution of a previously linear practice has produced new connective pathways between the collective theme and individual project contributions, as well as for the publication itself. Which, for the very first time, will now live as a digital, broadcast, and print format.

Traces of this Exquisition Commons approach can be found throughout the publication, mostly obviously in the scrapping of the aforementioned Collective Editorial for the Metafesto: 'Making a Vessel in the Sky', and the bridge prompts that you will notice accompanying each text, that draw a poetic line not only between each individual contribution and the collective theme, but to its entangled clan of fellow contributions, too.

A huge and heartfelt appreciation goes to the entire School of Commons 2025 cohort for the dedication they have placed into the contributions of this publication, and to the SoC Issues Steering Committee: Belén, Chantelle, Klara, Lou, and Layla, without whom this physical publication, and its broadcast companion, would not exist.

—— Amy Gowen, ISSUES Editor

School of Commons (SoC) is a global community-based initiative dedicated to peer learning, and the study and development of self-organised knowledge production - through commons-based methods and practices. Currently hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK), the program takes place mostly online.

Find out more at schoolofcommons.org

This text is not an introduction, or at least not in the sense that a book might expect of one. This publication refuses sequence: it circulates, drifts, returns, disappears, and reappears. What follows is a story about the people who brought it into being.

We (as the 2025 School of Commons cohort) wanted to write a manifesto, a strong, direct text communicating our beliefs and interests to the world. We imagined the process as a possible means to bring us closer. A manifesto is something that makes you feel as though you are part of something, but what are we part of exactly? Another idea emerged: a toolkit for resilience that might be more useful. What unfolded (slowly, awkwardly, collectively) is neither and both. Something generated through the friction, confusion, and humour of trying to communicate with one another and to create a single voice out of many. A manifesto is a declaration meant to give direct directions, but a metafesto would help find that direction.

It comes as no surprise to anyone that collective writing is a difficult task. Over the course of several (online) meetings about how exactly to write together, and how to talk about the group's desires along with the frustrations that come from the ways things work out: some oddly and others not at all. One metaphor has stayed with us: a boat in the sky. The general mood, somewhat lost, strange, unreachable. This was a peculiar boat, a boat that maybe could not be seen from the ground, a boat that exists only because we insist on imagining it, and a boat we can board only if we learn how to access it together.

In this sense, the metafesto is not a declaration but a gesture of closeness. It is an orientation device for navigating uncertainty together. It tries to accompany artists and collectives, offering not instructions but invitations to reimagine, to reorganise, to remember that collective imagination can be a form of anchoring. It is a tool insofar as it allows others to replicate a metaphor that was useful for us. While thinking about a boat or groups of boats, the word 'flotilla' crossed our exchanges. This was initially floated as a name for this gathering of sky-boats, but we are mindful of its militaristic roots. Language itself can reproduce systems we aim to soften or transform. The discussion occurred in parallel with the Global Sumud Flotilla, a diverse assembly of people coming together in a collective mission, highlighting how 'flotilla' can also signify collective action, solidarity, and shared courage outside military contexts. At a moment marked by devastating violence, including the ongoing Palestinian genocide, disarming our vocabulary is part of disarming our thinking. This publication leans toward regenerative language, toward imagining the boat not as a war-formation but as a pilgrimage, a village, or a gift-giver.

For now, this metafesto holds our attempt to travel toward difference with curiosity, towards each other with generosity, towards the unknown with collective imagination. The boat in the sky also circulates, drifts, returns, disappears, and reappears when you need it.

There is no first page, by design.
The moment you decide to step onto the boat in the sky you are part of the crew.

Here you will find instructions to guide you in making your own metafesto. On the left are the prompts, and on the right is how we (as the 2025 cohort) answered them.

There is not a concrete way of doing it, and no right or wrong. These prompts are meant to spark reflection, dialogue, and experimentation, whether with yourself or collectively. Tweak them, build them up, or skip them as you please.

MAKING A VESSEL IN THE SKY – An exquisite commons writing exercise for useful metaphors

A boat is a vessel for travelling on water [1]. We use boat and vessel interchangeably, although we understand that all boats are vessels, but not all vessels are boats. This activity will yield the descriptions of three boats. We are including our suggested steps towards this end alongside our methods and responses for realising this collective exercise.

Step 1

Separate into three groups. Assign names for the groups and separate names for the boats.

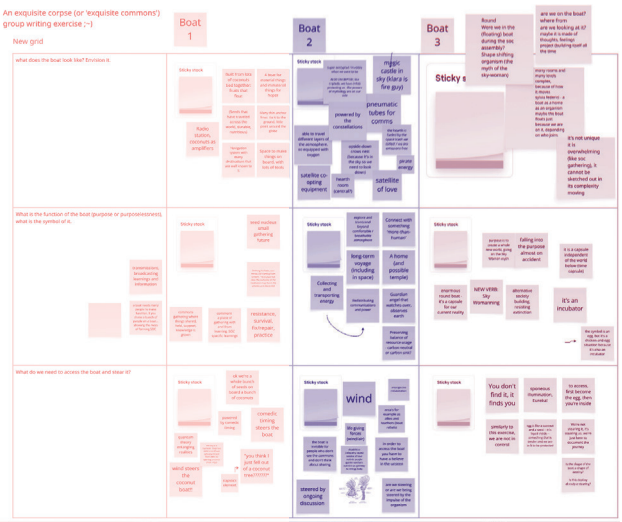
SoC 2025 Cohort´s answer to step 1

Breakout rooms of 3–4 participants: A B C
Boats, organised by colour: Blue Orange Pink

Step 2

Find a way to keep a collective record of your discussion: a recording, a designated notetaker, a shared document.

SoC 2025 Cohort´s answer to step 2


An exquisite corpse (or 'exquisite commons') group writing exercise ;-)
New grid
Boat 1
Boat 2
Boat 3
what does the boat look like? Envision it.
Sticky stock
Radio station, resonate as amplifiers
Built from bits of (re)used to create a boat that floats
A base for several things to cling to for hope
Sticky stock
Sticky stock
Sticky stock
magic castle in sky (Mara is fire guy)
pneumatic tubes for comms
powered by the constellations
able to travel different layers of the atmosphere, so equipped with oxygen
upside-down crows nest, looking out for the sky to cut need to look down
Satellite co-ordinating equipment
Search rooms, asteroid
satellite of love
Sticky stock
Round
Were we in the (floating) boat during the soc assembly/ Shape shifting organism (the myth of the skyvessel)
are we on the boat? where from are we looking at it? maybe it is made of thoughts, feelings project (building itself at the time
many rooms and many kinds complex
Sticky s
A floating igloo/ tepee/ a boat as a home as an organism (we are all apart from just because we are on it, depending on who joins
It's not unique it is overwhelming (like soc gathering), it cannot be sketched out in its complexity moving
What is the function of the boat (purpose or purposelessness), what is the symbol of it..
Sticky stock
seed nucleus small gathering future
resistance, survival, fix/repair, practice
Sticky stock
Connect with other (human/ more than human) humans
long-term voyage (including in space)
A home (and possible temple)
Collecting and transporting energy
Guardian angel/ that watches over observes earth
Sticky stock
Falling into the purpose almost on accident
NEW VIBES Sky Vorhanning
absolutist building, resisting extinction
it's an incubator
What do we need to access the boat and steer it?
Sticky stock
cometic timing steers the boat
"you think I just fell out of a coconut tree/?????"
wind steers the coconut boat!
Sticky stock
wind
We going forces (weather)
steered by ongoing discussion
Sticky stock
You don't find it, it finds you
spontaneous Humanitarian, Curatorial
similarity to this exercise, we are not in control
to access, first become the egg, then you're inside

1) SoC 2025 Cohort´s approach on a Miro board

Step 3

There are three prompts that cover vision, purpose, and access of each boat. Each group will have 15 minutes to answer each prompt. All groups will answer each prompt at the same time, then 'move to' the next boat. Write a minimum of three phrases or sentences for each prompt. Spend five minutes sharing responses with the entire group before moving boats again.

SoC 2025 Cohort´s answer to step 3

Prompt #1 vision
- Group A in Blue Boat
- Group B in Orange Boat
- Group C in Pink Boat

Prompt #2 purpose
- Group C in Blue Boat
- Group A in Orange Boat
- Group B in Pink Boat

Prompt #3 access
- Group B in Blue Boat
- Group C in Orange Boat
- Group A in Pink Boat

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[1] Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "boat," accessed November 30, 2025, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/boat

Step 3a

Prompt #1

15 minutes

What does the boat look like?

Take 5 minutes to share

SoC 2025 Cohort´s answer to step 3a

Built from lots of coconuts tied together: fruits that float.
A boat for material things and immaterial things: for hopes.
(Seeds that have traveled across the world, durable, nutritious)
Many thin anchor lines tie it to the ground, little points around the globe.
Radio station, coconuts as amplifiers.
Navigation system with many destinations that are well known to it.
Space to make things on board, with lots of tools!

Step 3b

Prompt #2

15 minutes

What is the boat's function? What does it symbolise? Is it purposeful, or purposeless?

Take 5 minutes to share

SoC 2025 Cohort´s answer to step 3b

Seed nucleus small gathering future.
Transmissions, broadcasting learnings and information.
Forming in chaos, nonhierarchical - starting from scratch,
Revolution not clear - the outcome of the revolution must be in the process and discomfort.
A boat needs many people to function, if you threw a bunch of people on a boat... showing
the mess of forming SoC.
Commons gathering where things are shared, held, supported, and knowledge is grown.
Commons: a place of gathering with and from learning.
SoC-specific learnings.
Resistance, survival, fix/repair and practice.

Step 3c

Prompt #3

15 minutes

What do we need to access and steer the boat?

Take 5 minutes to share

SoC 2025 Cohort´s answer to step 3c

Ok we're a whole bunch of seeds on board a bunch of coconuts.
Powered by comedic timing;
comedic timing steers the boat.
Quantum theory entangling realities.
The key is a machete - they look violent but it's an agricultural tool that's best for opening
coconuts (fruit ninja).
You think I just fell out of a coconut tree???????
(slapstick element)
Wind steers the coconut boat!!

Step 4

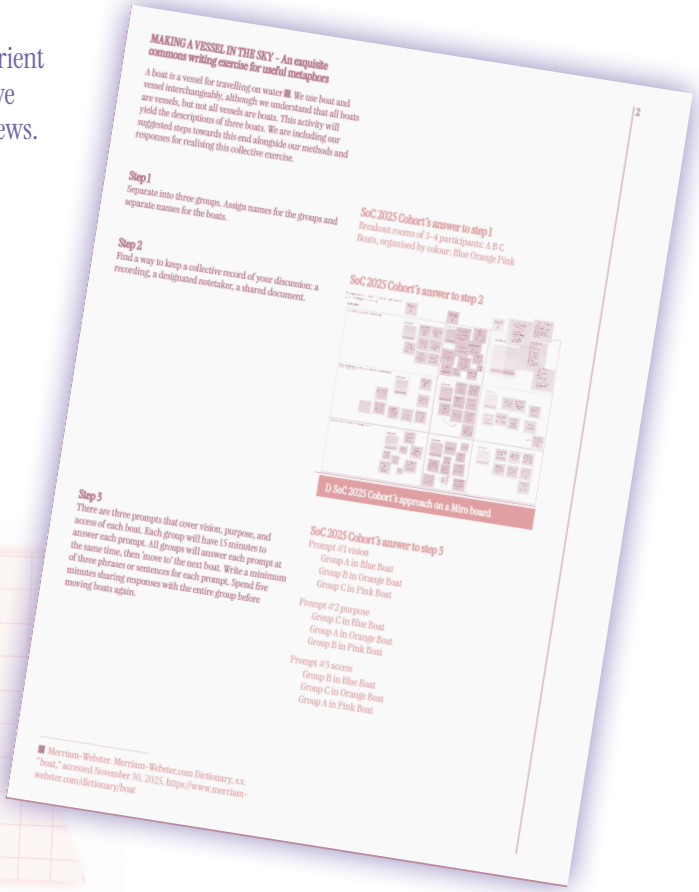
As a group, reflect on each boat as a whole of its own. Find a method to distill the boat as a vessel collectively. This could include formulating emergent sentences or poems, or drawing a cohesive image of the boat based on the different prompt responses. These reflections can also take the form of further questions.

SoC 2025 Cohort´s answer to step 4

How to think about these boats:
What are the similarities between the three of them?
Or just similar between two?
What contrasts are there between them?
Are there different ways of speaking about the same thing?
Or is it more like a holy trinity situation (each is different, but all three are one)?
Fuck, marry, kill the boats?
Is there a boat Venn diagram?
Is there a boat we want to be, we don't want to be, or that we are scared we might never be?
What would you name the boat?
And when would you take her on her maiden voyage?

Step 5

Draw connections between these useful metaphors and lived reality, and then set the boat afloat. In sharing moments inspired by these boats, or that inspired these boats, we orient ourselves toward common missions, describing alternative modes of communicating our intentions, motives, and views.



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Group C in Blue Boat
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Prompt #3 access
Group B in Blue Boat
Group C in Orange Boat
Group A in Pink Boat

[1] Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "boat," accessed November 30, 2025, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/boat

*I think we should include a screenshot of the metafesto toolkit here so it's even more 'meta'

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COLOR PLATES OF IMAGES

This section provides full-color renderings of images for the publication. Certain projects rely on accurate color representation to share the meaning behind the work. For others, it is an added aesthetic complement. The following full-color images correspond to the following chapters, the order of appearance:

- Common (d)estructuras
- Colour, an inclusive visual language for climate communicationMentoring as Practice
- Likon'yor - knowledge production through the unseen
- Mentoring as Practice
- Tensile Paradise Field Manual
- Broudou School

COMMON (DE)STRUCTURAS

by el puente_lab (Juan Esteban Sandoval & Alejandro Vásquez Salinas) and Mariangela Aponte Núñez.

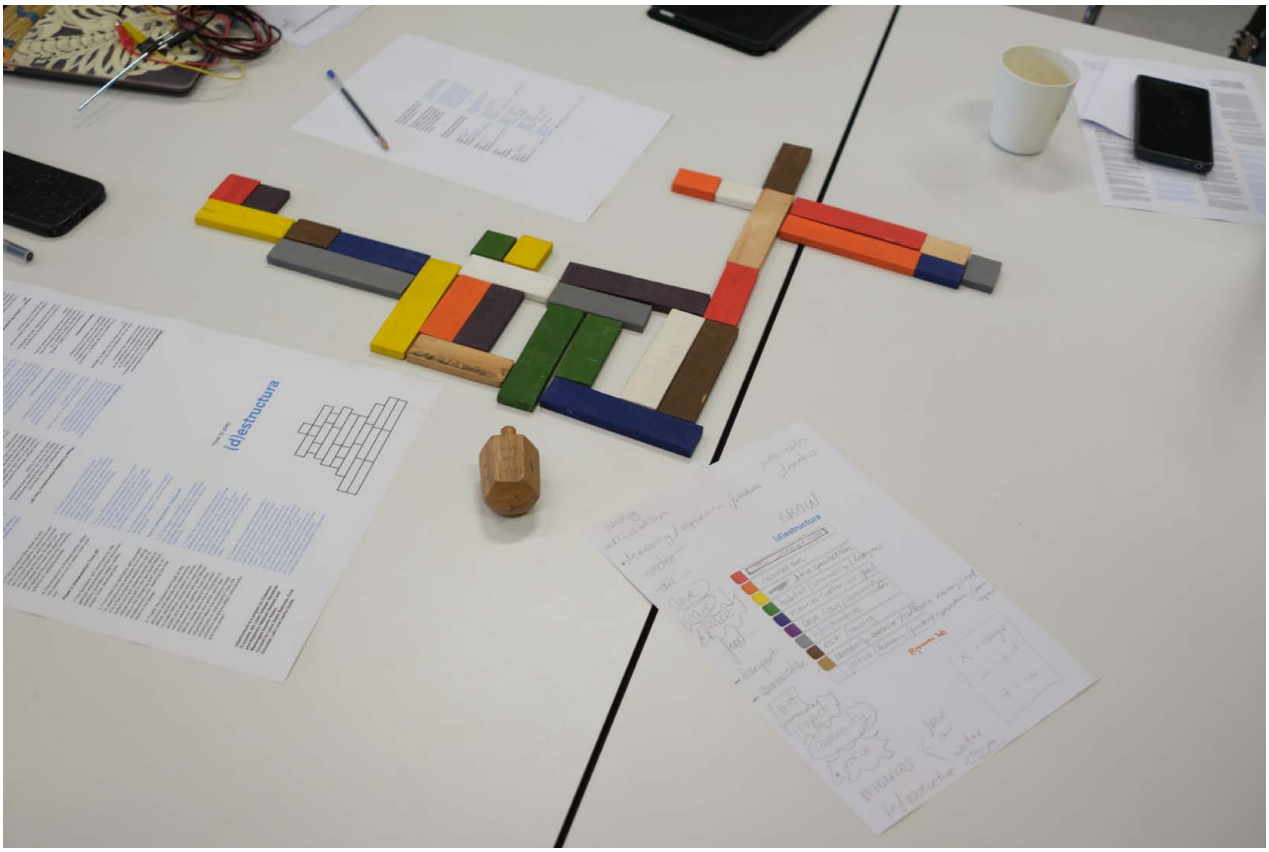


Table #1, Zurich, July 4th, 2025, by (de)structura

Table #2, Zurich, July 4th, 2025, , by (de)structura

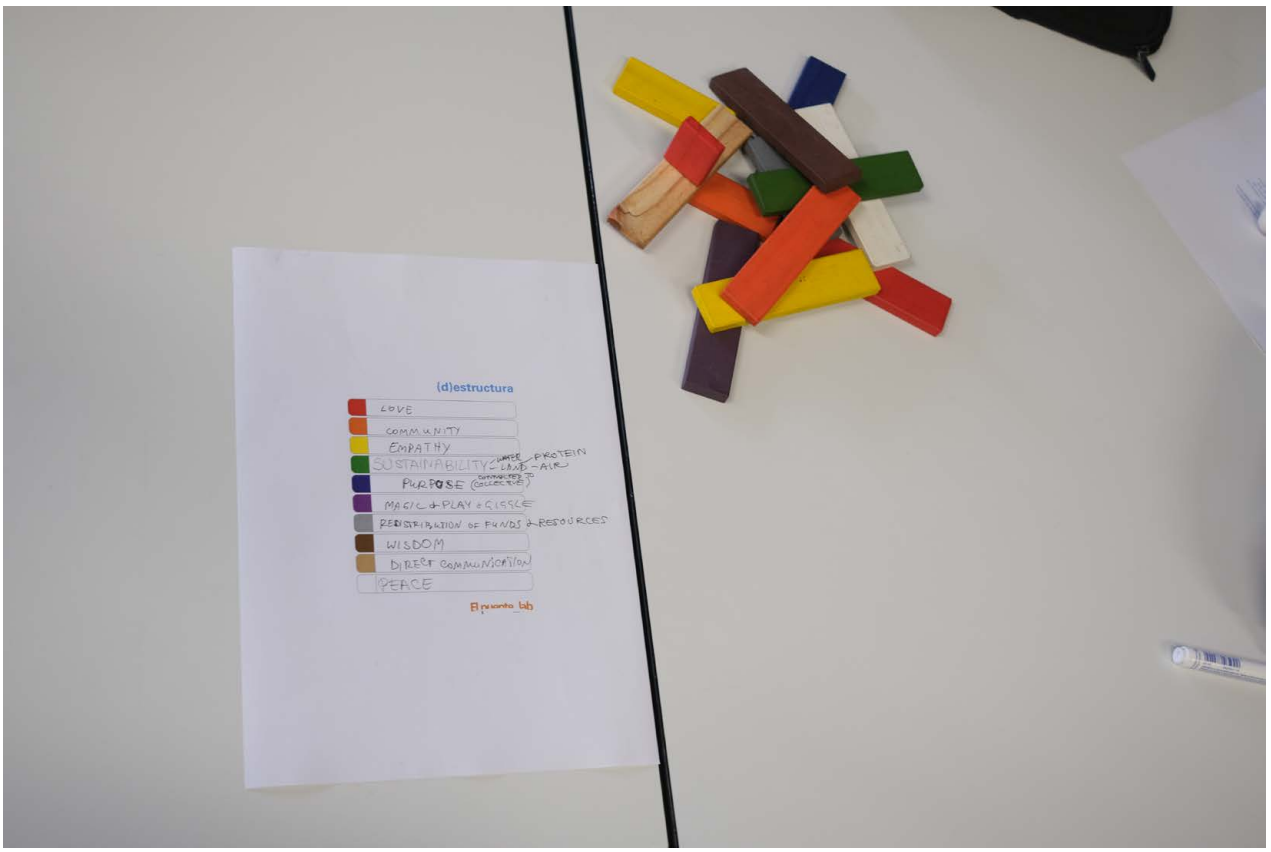


Table #3, Zurich, July 4th, 2025, by (de)structura

COLOUR, AN INCLUSIVE VISUAL LANGUAGE FOR CLIMATE COMMUNICATION

by Yue Wu, Liliana Scapucci, Nina Buchmann

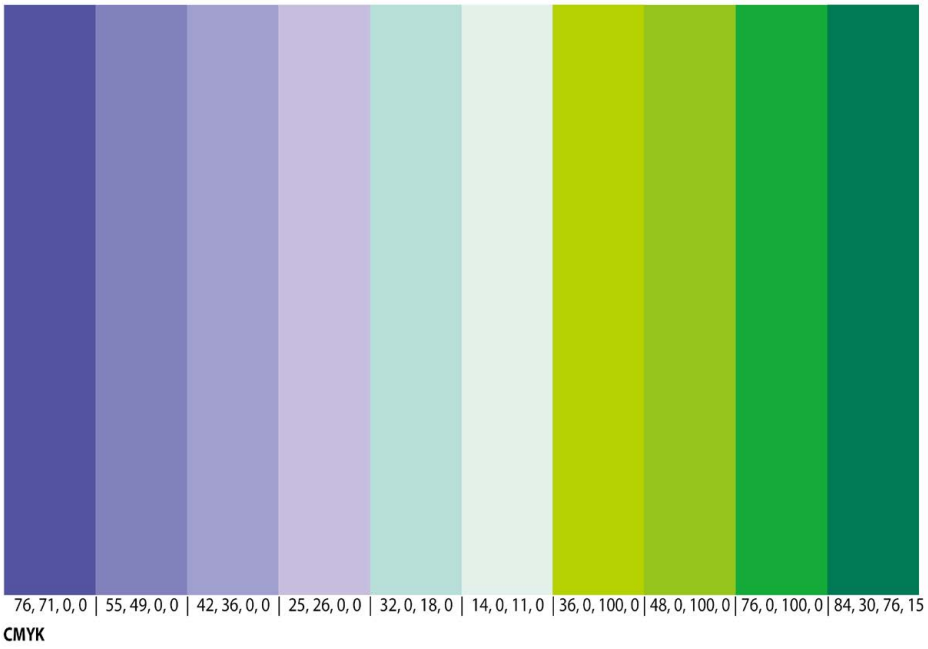


Figure 1: Colour codes for the data visualisation of net ecosystem CO2 exchange (NEE). Colour codes are expressed in CMYK to ensure consistency in print.

Figure 2: Claude Monet, Lavacourt under Snow (ca. 1878–1881). Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 3: Sir John Everett Millais, Ophelia (ca. 1851–52). Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 4: Marc Davis, Sleeping beauty (1959). Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

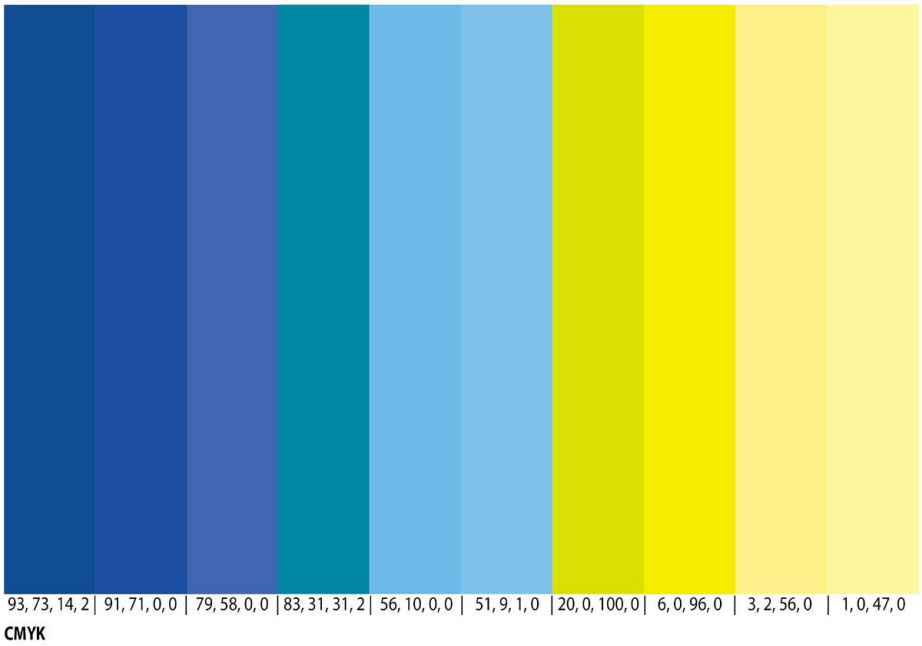


Figure 5: Colour codes for the data visualisation of precipitation. Colour codes are expressed in CMYK to ensure consistency in print.

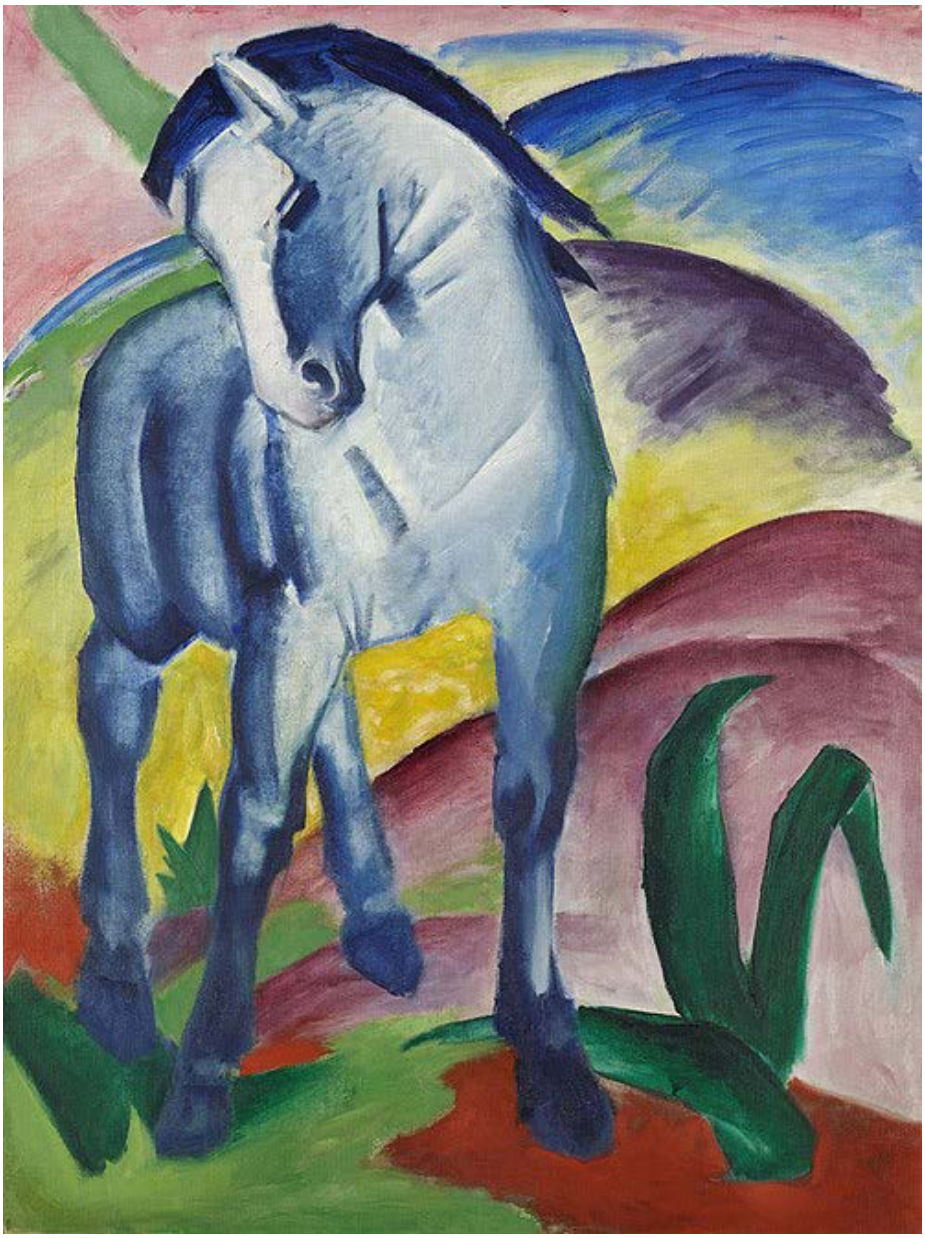


Figure 6: Franz Marc, Blaues Pferd I (1911). Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

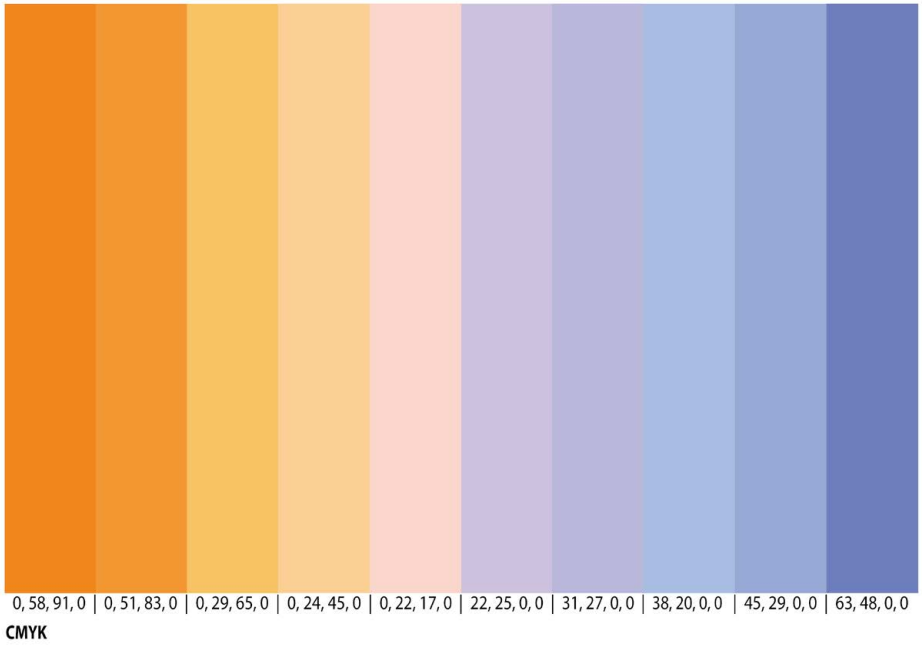
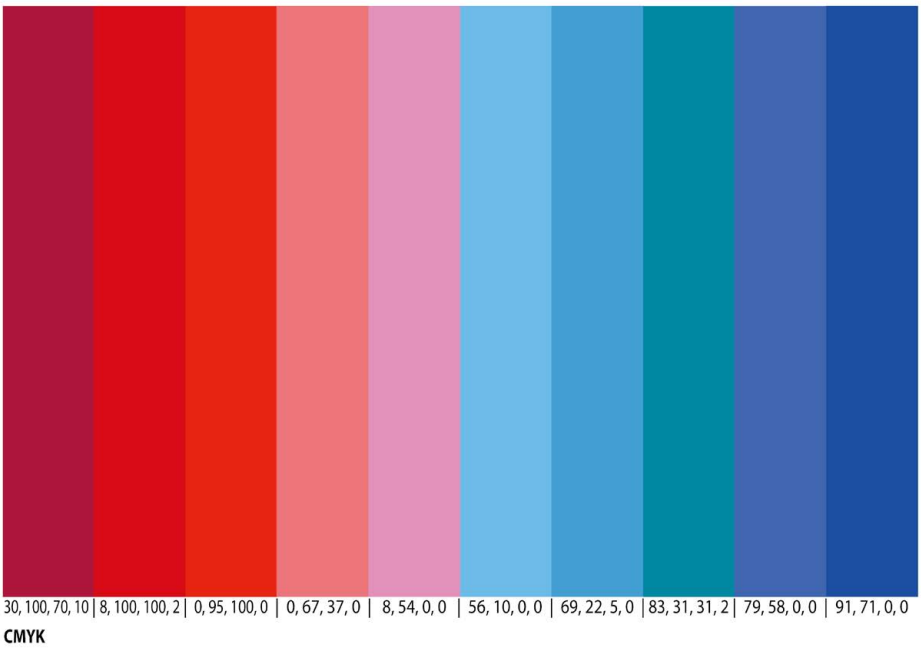


Figure 7: Colour codes for the data visualisation of vapour pressure deficit (VPD). Colour codes are expressed in CMYK to ensure consistency in print.

Figure 8: Hibiscus. Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 9: Periwinkle. Image source: Wikimedia Commons.



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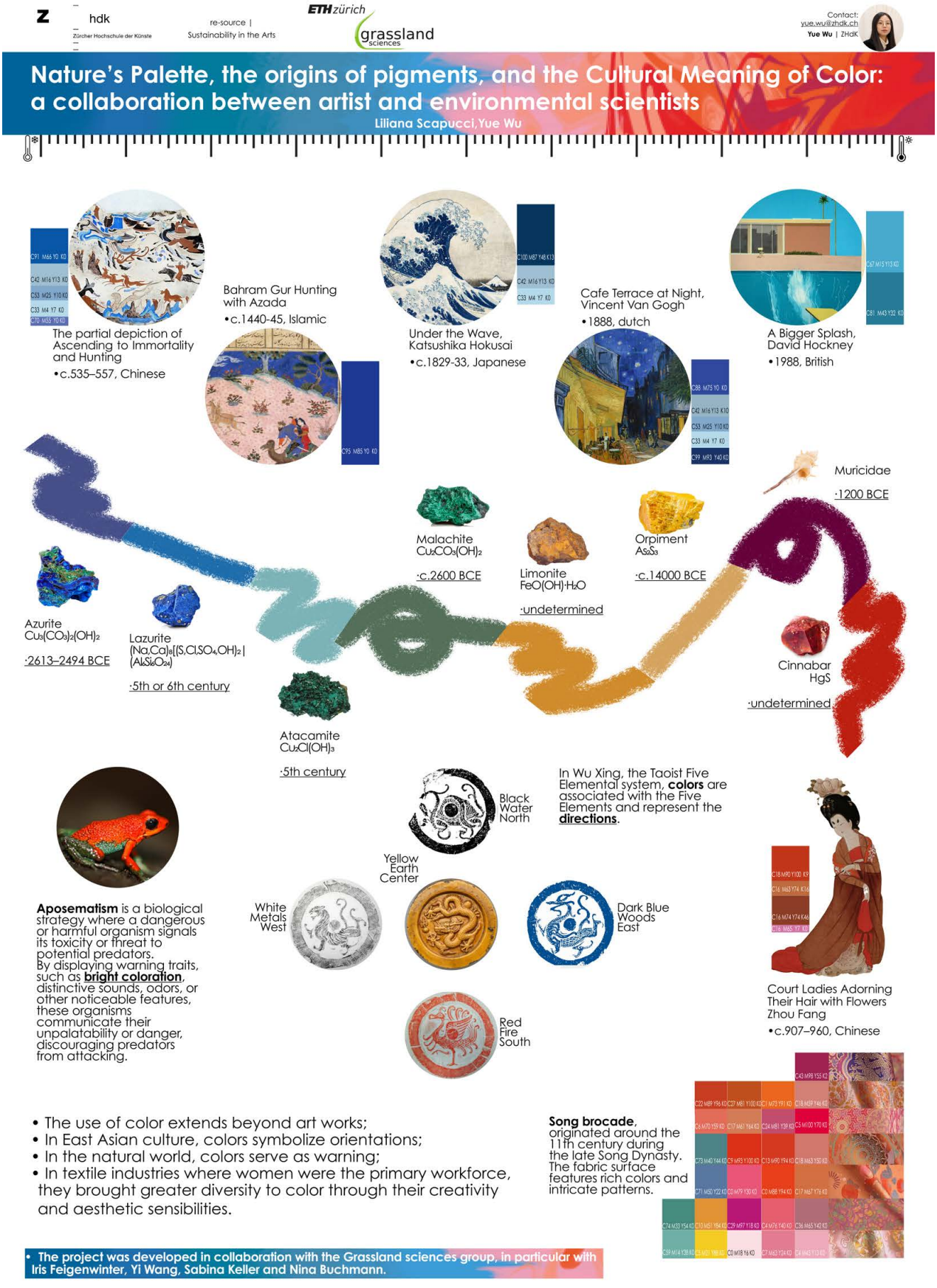

hdk
Zürcher Hochschule der Künste
re-source | Sustainability in the Arts
ETH zürich
grassland sciences
Contact:
yue.wu@zhdk.ch
Yue Wu | ZHdK
Nature's Palette, the origins of pigments, and the Cultural Meaning of Color: a collaboration between artist and environmental scientists
Liliana Scapucci, Yue Wu
The partial depiction of Ascending to Immortality and Hunting
•c.535–557, Chinese
Bahram Gur Hunting with Azada
•c.1440-45, Islamic
Under the Wave, Katsushika Hokusai
•c.1829-33, Japanese
Cafe Terrace at Night, Vincent Van Gogh
•1888, dutch
A Bigger Splash, David Hockney
•1988, British
Azurite
Cu3(CO3)2(OH)2
·2613–2494 BCE
Lazurite
(Na,Ca)8[(S,Cl,SO4,OH)2|(Al6Si6O24)
·5th or 6th century
Atacamite
Cu2Cl(OH)3
·5th century
Malachite
Cu2CO3(OH)2
·c.2600 BCE
Limonite
FeO(OH)·H2O
·undetermined
Orpiment
As2S3
·c.14000 BCE
Muricidae
·1200 BCE
Cinnabar
HgS
·undetermined
Aposematism is a biological strategy where a dangerous or harmful organism signals its toxicity or threat to potential predators. By displaying warning traits, such as bright coloration, distinctive sounds, odors, or other noticeable features, these organisms communicate their unpalatability or danger, discouraging predators from attacking.
In Wu Xing, the Taoist Five Elemental system, colors are associated with the Five Elements and represent the directions.
Black Water North
Yellow Earth Center
White Metals West
Dark Blue Woods East
Red Fire South
Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers
Zhou Fang
•c.907–960, Chinese
• The use of color extends beyond art works;
• In East Asian culture, colors symbolize orientations;
• In the natural world, colors serve as warning;
• In textile industries where women were the primary workforce, they brought greater diversity to color through their creativity and aesthetic sensibilities.
Song brocade, originated around the 11th century during the late Song Dynasty. The fabric surface features rich colors and intricate patterns.
• The project was developed in collaboration with the Grassland sciences group, in particular with Iris Feigenwinter, Yi Wang, Sabina Keller and Nina Buchmann.

Figure 11: The Poster exhibited at Sustainable University Day 2024 and the School of Commons Gathering 2025.

ETH zürich grassland sciences

re-source | Sustainability in the Arts

Contact:
lscapucci@ethz.ch
Liliana Scapucci | ETH

The colours of climate change impacts on the ecosystems: a collaboration between artist and environmental scientists

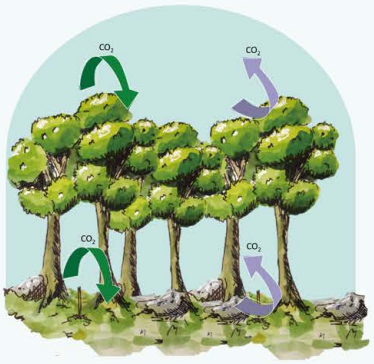
Liliana Scapucci, Yue Wu

FRAMEWORK

Terrestrial ecosystems have an essential role in the cycle of carbon between the land and the atmosphere. The carbon cycle is in the spotlight of **policies to mitigate climate change** effects. **Anthropogenic emissions** ofgreenhouse gases (ghg), like CO_2, are the direct cause climate change, which generate **global warming** as a consequence.
The potential of terrestrial ecosystems to mitigate ghg emissions is under pressure because some of the effects of climate change affect the functioning of such ecosystems.

IMPACTS

Environmental conditions like **temperature**, **precipitation**, **soil** and **atmospheric dryness**, have an effect of the amount of CO_2 that is absorbed and released by terrestrial ecosystems.
Climate change is increasing the frequency of **extreme events** that can damage terrestrial ecosystems and limit their capacity to absorb and store CO_2.



MEASUREMENTS

We measure CO_2 fluxes and many environmental variables (i.e., air temperature) in different ecosystems ad different altitudes in Switzerland. The measurements are part of the **Swiss Fluxnet**. Data products are **Open Access** and widely use to study ecosystem responses to climate change and management practices.

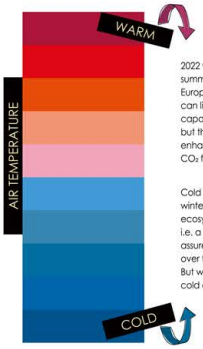
CHALLENGE

Communicating the effects of climate change on the ecosystems through the study of CO_2 fluxes to a vast audience is challenging. Basics concepts might be complicated to understand but their implications are of public interest. Our challenge is to find **insightful** and **creative** ways to communicate our science to a vast audience.

OUR MAIN QUESTIONS

How is temperature increasing in different ecosystems types?
How extreme is drought at different altitudes and ecosystems?
What is the capacity of different ecosystems to absorb and store CO_2?

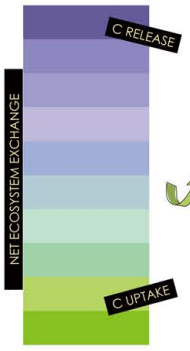
THE COLOURS OF THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE ECOSYSTEMS



2022 was the hottest summer ever recoded in Europe. Hot temperatures can limit the ecosystem capacity to absorb CO_2, but they can also enhance the release of CO_2 from the soil.

Cold temperatures during winters are crucial for ecosystems to be resilient: i.e. a long snow cover can assure waterresources over the growing season. But with climate change cold days are decreasing.

Vapour pressure deficit (VPD)is an indicator of atmospheric dryness. If the VPD is high, plants will reduce their photosynthetic activity to avoid water losses. Days with high values of VPD are increasing with climate change. In the case of croplands, they can cause severe damages to the harvest.

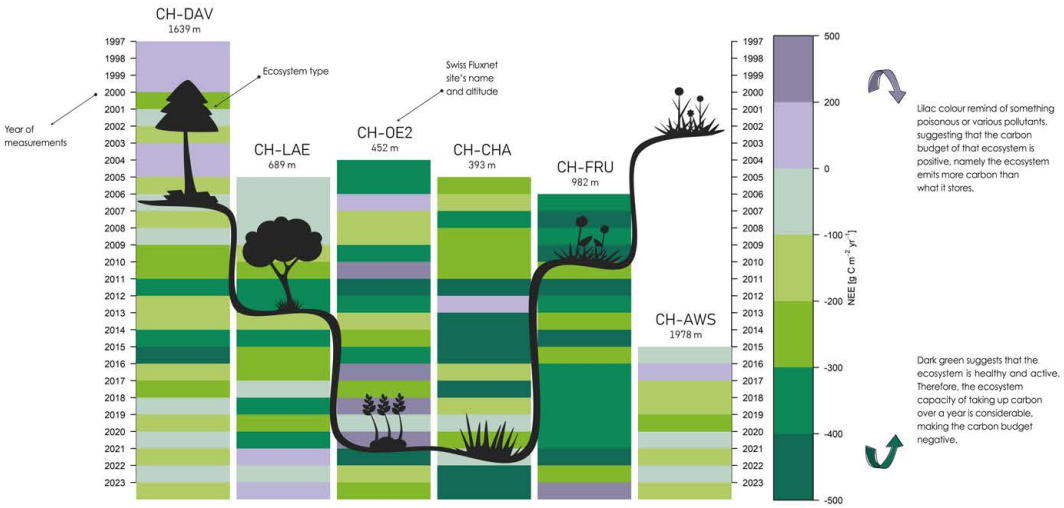


Terrestrial ecosystems take up CO_2 through photosynthesis and release it through respiration. The sum of these two fluxes is the **Net Ecosystem Exchange (NEE)**. Currently, annual sums of NEE (carbon budget) are used to understand how much carbon is released or taken up by an ecosystem. The carbon budget depends on many environmental and management factors.

Intensively managed ecosystems like croplands can emit large amount of carbon to the atmosphere depending on the management practices.

Forests and grasslands take up large amounts of CO_2, and they benefit from warm temperatures and sufficient water in the soil. With climate change temperatures are often too hot and water too scarce and consequently their ability to store carbon can decrease.

THE FIGURE

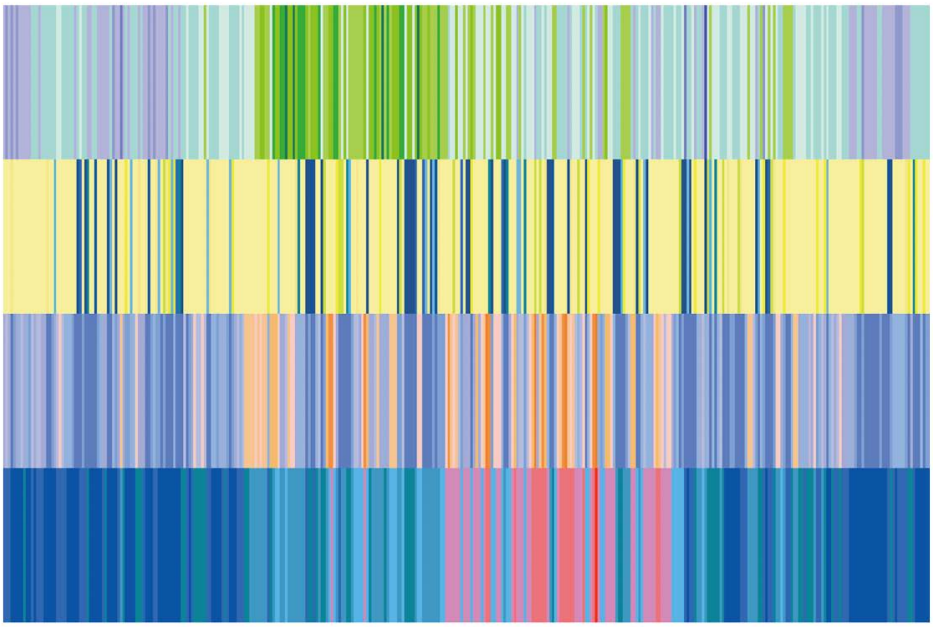


Lilac colour remind of something poisonous or various pollutants, suggesting that the carbon budget of that ecosystem is positive, namely the ecosystem emits more carbon than what it stores.

Dark green suggests that the ecosystem is healthy and active. Therefore, the ecosystem capacity of taking up carbon over a year is considerable, making the carbon budget negative.

• The project was developed in collaboration with the Grassland sciences group, in particular with Iris Feigenwinter, Yi Wang, Sabina Keller and Nina Buchmann.

Figure 12: The Poster exhibited at Sustainable University Day 2024 and the School of Commons Gathering 2025.



ETH zürich grassland sciences

The colours of CO_2 fluxes: enhancing public understanding of the "breathing" of ecosystems

Liliana Scapucci, Yue Wu, Yi Wang, Iris Feigenwinter, Sabina Keller, Susanne Burri, Nina Buchmann

Site name: Davos (CH-Dav)

Ecosystem type: Subalpine spruce forest

Year: 2020

Variables from top to bottom: daily Net Ecosystem Exchange, Precipitation, Vapour Pressure Deficit and Air Temperature

Altitude: 1639 a.s.l.

Contacts:

Dr. Liliana Scapucci liliana.scapucci@usys.ethz.ch

Yue Wu https://www.yuewu.website/

Project: QR code to link here:

Grassland sciences group

Figure 13 & 14: The postcard depicts the fluxes and climate variables of the Swiss spruce forest in Davos during 2020, located at an elevation of 1639 meters..

LIKON'YOR – KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION THROUGH THE UNSEEN

by Jere Ikongio

Likon'yor I (right)

Two bodies, two heads, faces hidden
inside woven baskets.
present, yet unreadable.
baskets carrying more than heads;
they carry memories like the wind
clothes flow like language inherited
down without writings
the bench becomes an altar of
waiting, as the wind carries the
knowledge.

Likon'yor II (below)

Standing still. Fleeting time.
Static bodies, city in motion,
refusing urgency,
anchored to an alternate rhythm.
Resistance through pause,
Time isn't linear. It alternates and
oscillates.

by Nora Sobbe

Note-spitting machine | photo: ©Marcel Rickli

TENSILE PARADISE FIELD MANUAL

by Sala de Té

Boulder with Daoist Paradise, Qing dynasty (18th century). Nephrite jade. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Heber R. Bishop, 1902.

Isma'il Jalayir, Ladies Around a Samovar, c. 1860. Oil painting. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

by Broudou School

Mobile Food Commons, by Broudou School

EXQUISITE COMMONS

Glacier Rapport

AWOL

Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange

Hitching a Ride to Enough English

Radio-Dreaming into the Electromagnetic Commons

Shortwave Collective

Colour, an inclusive visual language for climate communication

Yue Wu, Liliana Scapucci, Nina Buchmann

Jere Ikongio

Likon'yor - knowledge production through the unseen

Nora Sobbe

Mentoring as Practice

ARCHIIIVE

(d)estructura

Common (d)estrucuras

School of Commons 2025

Colored Image Plates

Notes on Practicing Family

Caro Bodensteiner

Seeds for Survival at the Edge of the Desert

LIOS Labs

School of Commons 2025

Exquisite Commons

Sala de Tē

Tensile Paradise Field Manual

Ula Liagaitė

Sitting on a Chair

CHIMERA

A Somatic Practice of Multiplicity

Broudou School

ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

COMMON (DE)STRUCTURAS

by el puente_lab (Juan Esteban Sandoval & Alejandro Vásquez Salinas) and Mariangela Aponte Núñez

el puente_lab is a collective shaped by Juan Esteban Sandoval and Alejandro Vásquez Salinas. It is a platform for artistic and cultural production, active in Medellín - Colombia, which aims to develop cultural projects on a local level, building bridges of communication with artists and experts through a strategy of international cooperation. The projects developed by El puente_lab meet the specific needs of the social context where they are carried out, using artistic creativity as a tool of activation of cultural projects that initiate, facilitate and / or accompany processes of education, communication and urban and social transformation.

Mariangela Aponte Núñez is a transdisciplinary artist whose practices explore from individual to collective creation the intersection between traditional media, artisan techniques and experimental electronics along with aesthetic, environmental, social and political concerns often through methodologies inspired by collaborative art and the DIWO (do it with others) practices. She has been an artist in residence of the Colombia-France Year 2017, El puente_lab, RESÒ 2015 and an ELAP 2012 scholarship holder. Her individual and collaborative projects have been presented in cities such as Cali, Havana, Turin, Strasbourg, Montreal and Buenos Aires. She has a Master's degree in technology and aesthetics of electronic arts (UNTREF, Buenos Aires) and a degree in visual arts (Universidad del Valle, Cali). She is currently interested in the art-body-life relationship, being a practitioner of Iyengar Yoga and observing plants, fungi and organic materials to create holistic artistic processes.

GLOSSARY TERM "(De)stucturing"

A playful activity to observe the structures and hierarchies of individual and collective values.

GLOSSARY TERM "Open up"

To enable the expansion of a situation, activity, group or context to integrate new and alternative perspectives and incorporate new ways of participation.

GLOSSARY TERM "Playground"

We use this term to refer to the space and time dedicated to collectively sharing and "renegotiating" the ideas and values that shape our lives. In the playground, understood from this perspective, ways of doing and understanding individual life are shared and discussed under pre-established rules, relating them to collective construction.

GLOSSARY TERM "Value"

It can refer to a quality, principle, or ideal that is considered desirable or worthwhile; it is what counts as important or good for a person, a community, or a culture. However, in the context of (d)estructura, it may also refer to a negative vision of the future or to an undesirable feature.

How can we envision a shared future? What common values allow us to imagine it together? What other elements, not typically considered "values," are necessary for this process? How can we reach agreements for the collective construction of a framework that reflects our individual and collective desires and visions?

(d)estructura was founded in 2016 in Cuba, initiated by the Colombian artists Juan Esteban Sandoval and Alejandro Vásquez Salinas (el puente_lab) along with Mariangela Aponte Núñez, in collaboration with Cuban curators Laura Salas Redondo and Erick González León, and Italian curator Cecilia Guida. From 2016 to 2019, (d)estructura traveled across various provinces of Cuba, exploring visions of the future through a game that began with the question: "How do you imagine your life in 10 years, and what do you need to achieve that vision?" This question was set against a backdrop of significant social, political, and economic changes in both Cuba and Colombia, including economic openings and crises, the death of Fidel Castro, and the signing of the peace accords between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), among other notable milestones and historical shifts at the start of the 21st century.

What began as a question about the future, initially addressed by Cuban participants, also served as a catalyst for imagining futures in other contexts. How would this question be answered in Colombia, in other Latin American countries, in Europe, or in North America? As a result, in 2019, the game reached Cali and Medellín in Colombia, along with Istanbul in Turkey, Biella in Italy, The Netherlands and by 2025, it had expanded to Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago de Chile, Chile; Zurich, Switzerland; Barcelona, Spain; and once again, Biella, Italy.

BOARD GAME METHODOLOGY

Los Hondones, Cuba, December 3rd, 2025.

How to Play:

The game begins with a minimum of 3 players and a maximum of 6 players seated around a table equipped with colored wooden pieces and a spinning top. Once the question is posed, the players collaborate to decide on 10 collective "values" that envision their future. Each of these values is assigned a color, corresponding to one of the 10 available colors.

As the game progresses, players must build the largest and most stable structure possible. The spinning top introduces an element of chance, as it determines whether players will add, remove, or replace pieces during their turns. Throughout the game, players consider important questions such as: What should be added, removed, or replaced? What does the structure need? What is missing? Which values are most important?

The game is facilitated by one or two people who introduce and explain the rules of the game and also have the role of observing the dynamics of the game to finally make a synthesis or interpretation of how the game unfolded, bringing out the main elements of the group's dynamics and the personal positions of the players and their impact on the resulting (d)estructura. The analysis made by the facilitator/observer is an invitation to the players to reflect on how individual decisions impact the group dynamic and vice versa. At the end of the game, participants share their reflections, feelings, memories, and emotions, enriching the group experience.

SOC 2025

Over nearly a decade of organic development with various communities, (d)estructura began exploring ways to expand and "open up" the game in 2024, making it accessible to different contexts. In September of that year, during the 25th anniversary celebration of UNIDEE at Cittadellarte Fondazione Pistoletto in Biella, Italy, the three Colombian artists met with David Behar Perahia, a former UNIDEE resident and participant in SoC 2024. He proposed himself to become an "ambassador" of the game, implementing it with the communities he was collaborating with.

This invitation to broaden the shared vision of desirable futures quickly brought various challenges. Internal and external tensions surrounding the game began to surface. Key questions emerged: What are the collective, collaborative, participatory, and cooperative dimensions of (d)estructura? How should copyright/copyleft issues be addressed? How can we ensure the participation of the three artists as "authors" while including others? How can we gather and analyze the data generated from each game to provide a broader perspective on both the game itself and the communities involved? How can we effectively communicate this information?

With these questions in mind, (d)estructura's participation in SoC 2025 was established within an ecosystem of initiatives focused on reflecting on the commons.

(D)ESTRUCTURA AT THE KICK-OFF, APRIL 11-13, 2025

At the beginning of April, we held the first (d)estructura presentation during the virtual Kick-Off. For this session, Alejandro and Mariangela aimed to pose the main question of the game. This initiative allowed the team to introduce, albeit remotely, a scenario for speculating on possible shared futures. To facilitate this discussion, four virtual rooms were organized where participants could meet for a few minutes to share and record their initial wishes. These ideas were collected on a Miro collective whiteboard, created as a communal repository for the entire development of SoC 2025. The groups expressed the following themes:

(d)estructura: How do you imagine your life in 10 years, and what do you need to achieve that vision?

Group 1: Stability, oranges, chickens, growing most of our food and sharing rent, no more war, good health, access to quality healthcare, artistic fulfillment, a post-money economy (no more funding applications or selling art), bartering, and universal income.

Group 2: No children, intergenerational exchange, rebuilding social infrastructure, a community-led alternative economy outside of capitalism, and the exchange of cultures and knowledge.

Group 3: Flexibility, resilience, bodies of water, diverse altitudes, trust, and service to life.

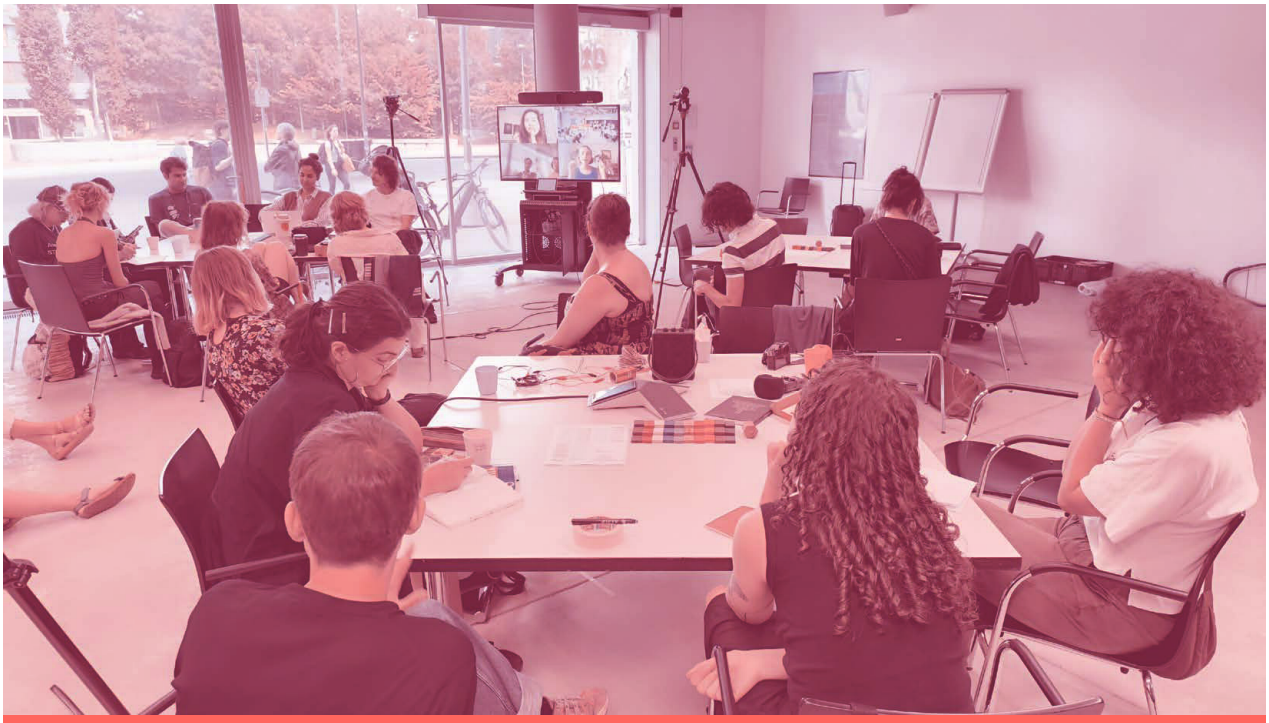
Group 4: Addressing current precarity as essential to rethinking this question, reframing the inquiry to identify what we do not want, which can help build a broader collective vision for the future.

In meetings with participants of varying ages, countries, and identities, a vision of the future emerged, marked by a desire for stability, community life, and a closer relationship with nature. Some participants imagined specific scenarios—such as growing their own food, raising chickens, or living among orange trees—while others focused on broader concepts like resilience, trust, or access to bodies of water. A common aspiration emerged across all groups: to move away from the logic of precarity and toward more humane economic models based on exchange, collaboration, and sufficiency.

For many, envisioning the future required first acknowledging the fragility of the present. Thus, redefining what they did not want became a necessary step to create space for new possibilities. There was also a shared desire to imagine renewed social structures where well-being does not rely solely on money, scholarships, or competition, but rather on solidarity networks, adaptable social infrastructure, and genuine dialogue between cultures and knowledge systems.

Though the visions varied from concrete images to more abstract reflections, they all converged on a singular horizon: a simpler, more conscious, and shared life. A future where community is the foundation, nature frames existence, and collective bargaining paves the way for building what is possible.

(D)ESTRUCTURA AT THE ANNUAL GATHERING JULY 4TH, 2025



Viaduktraum at ZHdK, July 4th, 2025.

Three months after the Kick-Off, the opportunity to participate in person at the Annual Gathering finally arrived. With a tight schedule, activities began early in the morning. It was the first time the 2025 cohort was meeting face-to-face. People were filled with joy at the realization of the reality beyond the screens, eager to make the most of the limited time and space. What were we going to do?

In this case, and given the travel costs, Mariangela traveled on behalf of the (d)estructura group. Juan had previously mailed some games for the presentation and as a donation to SoC. Mariangela had arrived from Cali, Colombia to Zurich, Switzerland at midnight on July 3rd, prepared to get things moving the next day. In the gathering room, three tables were set up for three games, along with three audiovisual recording setups.

The morning gained momentum with serious discussions about the future, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, ages, contexts, languages, and perspectives. Fundamental questions were posed: How do we envision a desirable future? What does the concept of the commons mean to us? How do we imagine the future of the community of practice?

Three simultaneous games progressed at their usual pace. In some cases, the initial discussions took longer than expected, while other groups organized themselves swiftly. This highlights the human experience of decision-making: for some, each choice requires deep reflection, while for others, the game calls for spontaneity and quick thinking.

Being the one who facilitated and observed the game, Mariangela moved through space and observed the emergence of three structures from the SoC 2025 cohort. The challenge of organizing collectively is always significant in the game. While it may seem simple to arrange small colored pieces on a table based on individual and collective

preferences, these small societies offer valuable insights into their organizational structures. Usually, chaos and order are created from an internal hierarchy of values that players establish through conversations, trial and error, consensus, or ultimately by urgency, as the time to organize is limited.

Throughout the game, the conversations took on remarkable depth and complexity. Each table was filled with laughter, engaging discussions, gestures of surprise, and perhaps a hint of adrenaline. Although the game is not competitive and there are no winners or losers, the shared experience in a specific time and space created an exhilarating atmosphere.

Applause and laughter erupted when one of the tables completed its (d)estructura, and the other two tables continued discussing and assembling until time ran out and they had to stop. The next instruction was to observe how the (d)estructuras were assembled, noting what was at the bottom and what was on top, how stable each structure was, and whether any or all of it represented the group and its members.

At this point, conversations became especially interesting. Individual and collective surprises emerged as participants reflected on their decision-making processes. Discussions revolved around the negotiations over what was considered important, who defended various values, which values were given less attention, and ultimately revealed the internal (d) estructuras that each person held.

TABLE #1

Red: open imagination

Orange: recreation

Yellow: future speculation

Green: habitat (sustainability / cleanness)

Blue: resources (water/air/food)

Purple: love / care / community

Grey: infrastructure

Brown: rest / housing

Wood: community archive / collective memory / ritual

White: justice (democracy / freedom / representation / peace / respect)

The initial decisions regarding the values involved lengthy discussions and negotiations. The brainstorming and value-imagining processes, often grouped into clusters, can be observed in the data sheet. After that, the game flowed very smoothly. The participants in this group recognized the challenge of constructing the "largest and most stable possible" structure by expanding horizontally, with the understanding that no value is inferior or superior to another. This creates a challenge in establishing "hierarchies," which is precisely the intriguing aspect to explore. What motivates the involved individuals to avoid vertical growth? Where does the structure begin and end, and from what perspective? I believe the shared space serves as a canvas for creativity and imagination on the horizon.

TABLE #2

Red: heart intelligence

Orange: innovation

Yellow: play

Green: sustainability

Blue: flexibility

Purple: care

Grey: learning

Brown: non-hierarchical organization

Wood: non-human centric / more than human awareness advocacy

White: equality – intergenerationality

The initial decisions, as well as the development of this game, followed a pace between the first and the second, neither fast nor slow. This group carefully considered the color and arrangement of each piece. Every piece was strategically placed, creating a well-balanced structure that harmonized the width of the base with its height. The pieces were primarily assembled horizontally, making the structure quite stable. However, by the end of the game, a few pieces still needed to be integrated. This can be observed in the image: one medium-sized piece and one small piece in gray and blue, along with one small piece in brown, red, orange, and wood.

TABLE #3

Red: love

Orange: community

Yellow: empathy

Green: sustainability (water / land / air / protein)

Blue: purpose (connected to collective)

Purple: magic + play + giggle

Grey: redistribution of funds and resources

Brown: wisdom

Wood: direct communication

White: peace

For this group, assigning values was a quick task. However, making decisions based on chance took longer. Initially, the group aimed to create a "star" shape instead of a square. Throughout the game, the structure evolved and became less traditional—neither wide nor tall, but rather entropic. By the end of the game, many pieces remained unintegrated. While most of the large pieces of each color were incorporated, far fewer of the medium and small pieces were, as shown in the image.

Table #2, Zurich, July 4th, 2025.

THE TABLES' ASSEMBLY

What transpired at the second meeting was more than just an exercise in assigning values to colors; it was a collective exploration of priorities, desires, and shared understandings of life. Although each table worked independently, the results converged almost organically, as if all three had been guided by a common ground. The colors reflected this collective thinking: affection, sustainability, and community emerged repeatedly, supported by values that were emphasized—care, empathy, justice, and equality.

It is noteworthy that "human" was not seen as a fixed center but as something that expands toward the more-than-human. For example, wood was associated with direct communication, ritual memory, and an enhanced awareness of other life forms. Similarly, brown—sometimes representing wisdom, sometimes rest, and sometimes non-hierarchical organization—demonstrated that solidity does not have to be rigid and can be sustained through collective learning.

The consistent presence of green at all three tables, always linked to sustainability, highlights a shared concern: life can only be envisioned if there is an environment that can support it. A similar pattern emerged with white, which consistently represented ethical values such as peace, justice, equality, respect, and representation. This convergence does not appear to be coincidental; instead, it indicates a profound agreement on the essential foundations for inhabiting the future.

Collectively, the colors from the second gathering illustrate a vision that combines emotional sensitivity, community care, ecological awareness, and a strong ethical foundation. They not only reveal the value assigned to each color but also signify the kind of world the participants wish to create and the values that make such a world possible.

Observing and reading between the interstices of the players' actions and the words spoken throughout the game, and then interpreting the resulting tensions into a collective vision, meant that the role as facilitator is an indispensable part of the mechanism that made the game meaningful. Observation and interpretation lie at the heart of what the game can offer in a collective discussion, among the personal experiences that emerge from those who take part. The facilitator begins as a passive observer but becomes active in drawing out and condensing the shared visions of the future that emerge. These interpretations, which we are now able to make—and which we as a collective have learned to make playing the game in different contexts—have been refined through ten years of experience. This is perhaps one of the important elements to define when the game becomes something that its creators are no longer part of. It is not just about communicating the game rules and providing materials to build a set; it is about transmitting an approach of observation and facilitation for a collective process.

BETWEEN THE KICK-OFF AND THE ANNUAL GATHERING

During both events—one conducted through virtual rooms and the other through in-person gaming—a crucial point of convergence emerged: envisioning the future is not just an individual endeavor, but a deeply collective act. Although the formats and dynamics varied, participants consistently returned to the same symbolic themes: community, sustainability, care, and the necessity to rebuild fairer social structures.

In the first event, these desires were expressed as aspirations: stability, alternative economies, trust, and simple living. In the second event, these same ideals were represented by colors associated with values: empathy, sustainability, justice, equality, care, infrastructure, and collective memory. While the language changed, the underlying concerns remained consistent.

Both gatherings reveal a clear pattern: to envision the future, we must examine the present, identify what is lacking, and design new ways of living together. The phrases shared on Zoom and the color associations at the table reflect the same drive: to create worlds where life—both human and non-human—can thrive without precariousness, loneliness, or rigid hierarchies. A shared vision emerges: a future built on common ground, guided by ethical and emotional values, and structured around cooperation and mutual responsibility.

INSIDE (D)ESTRUCTURA

So far, the game has maintained its usual rhythm while discovering other groups that, alongside it, imagine new possibilities. However, the questions motivating (d) estructura's participation in SoC 2025 remain open:

How can we expand the possibilities for participation, collaboration, cooperation, and co-creation within the current state of the (d)estructura game?

In what ways can we collect the information that emerges during games, and how can we conduct sensitive analysis and create visualizations to understand that data?

How might the development of virtual and physical platforms enhance exploration and narratives for (d)estructura?

What potential challenges could arise when attempting to broaden the range of participation in the project?

Complexity reaches beyond mere discussion and written word; it emerges powerfully in the real-world arena of collective bargaining. This situation calls for delicate and profound negotiation. The SoC experience has unlocked the potential to formulate both internal and external, individual and collective questions, explore possibilities, and assert our critical positions with conviction.

The decision to "open up" the game inspired participation in SoC, aiming to think collectively alongside other initiatives. This openness also sparked conversations among those of us who initiated this process nearly a decade ago—conversations that sometimes reveal opposing views, similar to the dynamics in games themselves. Although these conversations have not reached, until now, the level of depth they perhaps required, this time at SoC has triggered the need to respond to them as an imperative condition for the continuation of the project itself.

This raises questions that touch on both technical and ethical aspects:

1. *If the game is "released" for others—"ambassadors"—to activate in various communities, how can we follow these activations? How can we collect, process, and visualize this information?*
2. *Can a web platform be a viable tool for gathering these experiences? If so, what level of participation could it facilitate?*
3. *How can we ensure this project is economically sustainable for everyone involved?*
4. *How can we prevent opportunism from arising around a shared idea?*
5. *Finally, how can we free ourselves from the need to own?*

The participation of (d)estructura during SoC 2025 has primarily fallen on Mariangela, one of the initiators. As we navigate "adding, removing, and replacing" at the core of the project, we find ourselves limited in making decisions about something we are deeply involved with and whose history is intertwined with ours. We had engaged in conversations where, among several other ideas, the question of patenting the game emerged, which is non-negotiable for us. Politically and creatively, we do not see copyright or patents as compatible with the spirit of this project.

Although this process has not begun yet, one of the possibilities we have been imagining for the future of the game is the creation of a digital space where everything that happens after each play session can live on. Rather than simply recording outcomes, this platform would allow us to see how people intuitively connect colors with values, how different generations approach the values placed on the table, and how certain ideas—such as ecology, health, or love—appear and transform across different contexts. All of these could be compiled into a book or a publication.

Over time, this shared space could reveal the unique shapes, arrangements, and visual languages that emerge each time the game is played, offering new ways of reading and understanding those encounters. It could also become a kind of living map, showing where (d)estructura has been played around the world and highlighting the values that resonate most strongly in each place.

On the other hand, the creators are still exploring how to offer a physical version of the game for public use.

Imagining possible futures—futures founded on organizations grounded in shared values—requires open methodologies and materials that are adaptable without erasing the histories or legacies of those involved. For us, "opening up" the process is not an exercise of power or control; it is about creating common ground to nurture possibilities in a post-pandemic context marked by wars and social, economic, political, and ecological crises, along with the rise of technological monopolies and systematic (and often violent) restrictions on community participation. We also face an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, especially between the Global North and Global South.

This year, the SoC platform has been more than just an inspiration; it has acted as a sea for challenging questions. Navigating the Ways of Working methodological website led us to the book The Militancy of Joy by Bergman & Montgomery. In their reading of Spinoza, I discovered the idea of joy and also playfulness as the ability to create new causes with others—an increase in the power to affect and be affected. This text has profoundly reshaped our understanding not only of the creative project but of every facet of our lifes. Isn't that what we strive for whenever we engage with (d)estructuring or inhabit any moment of existence?

"The space beyond fixed and established orders, structures, and morals is not one of disorder; it is a space of emergent orders, values, and forms of life," as noted by bergman and Montgomery (2017). They later state, "Joyful Militancy is a fierce commitment to emergent forms of life in the cracks of Empire, along with the values, responsibilities, and questions that sustain them."

This book led us to bell hooks's The Will to Change, and today Mariangela wonder if this intrinsic need to open up possibilities in (d)estructura is also a feminist imperative: the potential for envisioning a feminist future. As bell hooks (2021) argues, a vision of change requires us to imagine a world where relationships are not governed by hierarchies, violence, or emotional repression, but by solidarity, empathy, and reciprocity.

Alongside this methodological framework, there is also the affective network created by the projects and the human and more-than-human beings that enable them. The resonance of shared motivations and concerns through the self-organized program in SoC has provided a refuge for believing in the collective imagination of possible futures. This includes not only the capacity to recognize, care for, and support one another, but also the opportunity to collaborate with the team that sustains a school of the commons amid the political and economic crises affecting culture locally and globally.

Almost ten years ago, when we envisioned (d)estructura, what mattered most to us—and continues to matter—is this sense of urgency: How do we imagine revolution and transformation today? How do we reorganize ourselves for tomorrow? How do we support each other in conflict?

For us, (d)estructura is more than an artistic project through playfulness; it represents living activism in every emergency. We've always known that the game becomes effective precisely when it "doesn't work"—when it doesn't lead to hierarchical structures, when its rules are questioned, or even disobeyed. Ultimately, emerging (d)estructuras are less about visible or physical forms and more about internal ones: those that are activated when we engage our own value systems in the space of the common.

The layers of analysis that emerge in each activation create extended cartographies of desires, commonalities, contrasts, and tensions. Yet, each encounter adds complexity. Each engagement redefines the values we strive to uphold, and sometimes, analytical effort can feel elusive, especially amid divergences and the boats that stray off course.

But how are we going to analyze all this?

We still don´t have a definitive answer, because for the moment what intrigues us it is the very possibility of observation.

What if someone appropriates this idea?

We wonder, does the future belong only to a select few? Isn't that what, in the words of Bergman & Montgomery, the Empire has led us to believe-that we have no agency over our futures because they have already been designed by others? Shouldn't the future be an active re-appropriation of our lives in the present?

And what about all the data we collect in the games?

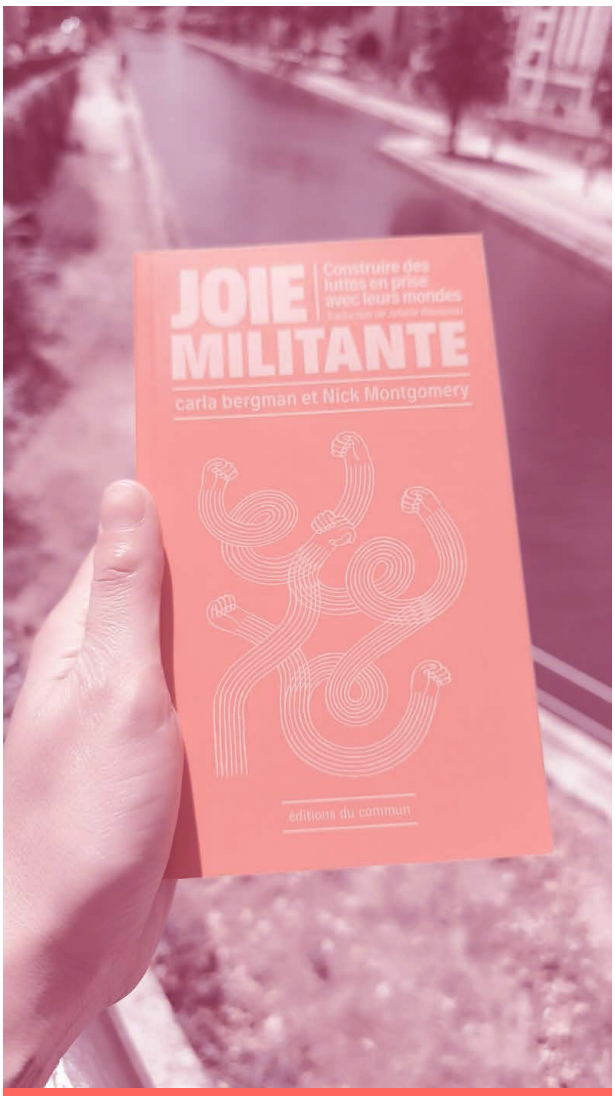
We deeply question: Aren't data, as a commodity, just another form of control wielded by the BigTech today? Who owns the information about individual and collective desires and needs? Shouldn't we actively reclaim the agency we have over this imagination/information? How can we create meaningful connections for transformation that are sustainable but also maintain a critical stance toward the exploitation of individual and collective information? And above all, how can we remind ourselves today that we are more than just data to train AIs?

This game originated in Cuba in 2016, a time when internet access and information were heavily restricted. One hour of mobile internet cost two dollars, which was unaffordable for many Cubans. Fast forward ten years, and the situation has dramatically changed. Smartphones, network connections, and systems for generating information are now nearly ubiquitous worldwide. People share their desires and needs daily on social media. Artificial intelligence models are trained continuously by thousands, even millions, of people, both consciously and unconsciously.

Never before has so much human-generated information been so centralized, controlled, and monitored. Never before has there been a system capable of predicting future trends based on globally collected information. Despite this advancement, we firmly believe in the fundamental

human need for face-to-face interaction in negotiations. Understanding our own desires, needs, and limitations is crucial for comprehending those of others. We believe that the potential for genuine encounters remains irreplaceable. This is perhaps what keeps (d)estructura a relevant and essential game today. Let's play together!

Do we have answers for the future? We barely have a handful of present desires and needs for a vessel in the air.



Joie Militante by édition du commun

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ARCHIIVE

by Alisa Probylova, Kateryna Vavrynchuk and Oleksandra Tsapko

Alisa Probylova is a visual artist and designer whose work combines practice and research across multiple media. With a background in visual art, printmaking, and graphic design, she explores themes of memory, home, and forced migration in her artistic practice. Her current research inquiry focuses on modern digital cultures, often resulting in projects that merge creative expression with critical investigation. As a designer, she specialises in book design and production, treating books as both vessels of information and artistic artifacts.

Kateryna Vavrynchuk is a Ukrainian cultural worker and activist based in Zurich. Her work focuses on organising, curating, and assisting events that encompass performance, music, film, theatre and fine arts. She has a background in contributing to the cultural development of her hometown, Khmelnytskyi, where she was a part of the self-organised non-commercial collective Bodrayakorova (2015-17). After graduating with a Culture and Media Management degree in Cracow, Poland, she has worked in contemporary art galleries and assisted at various art and music festivals. In Berlin, she gained curatorial experience at a feminist gallery and assisted curators of Berlin Atonal: Metabolic Rift 2021. Since 2022, Kateryna has been an active member of Zurich's cultural scene, organising solidarity events (380 collective, Anti-Imperial Resistance Grid, Gornyatko community kitchen), and working at cultural institutions such as Zentralwäscherei, Gessnerallee, and Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst. Her artistic practice emphasises creating safer spaces for marginalised communities and exploring topics such as decoloniality, trauma, sexuality, and queerness. Since 2024 she has dived into the music field, becoming a Furka Radio and Zentralwäscherei Dj resident.

Oleksandra Tsapko is a multimedia artist born in Kyiv, Ukraine, and currently residing in Zurich, Switzerland, following the onset of the full-scale invasion. Her academic journey includes studying Graphic Design at the Kyiv Academy of Media Arts in 2020, followed by enrollment at the School of Visual Communication in 2021. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts at Zürich University of the Arts in 2025 and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Design: Trends & Identity.

GLOSSARY TERM "Holodomor"

(Death by hunger, in Ukrainian) — is a genocide of the Ukrainian nation committed in 1932-1933, that refers to the starvation of millions of Ukrainians as a result of Soviet policies. (sources: holodomor research and education consortium, holodomorsmuseum.org.ua)

GLOSSARY TERM "Somatic practice"

Somatic practices help address the impact of traumatic experiences on the body. They integrate mindfulness to deepen body awareness, a vital aspect for managing symptoms like chronic pain and panic attacks. (source: traumainstitute.com)

GLOSSARY TERM "Collective memory"

Refers to the process through which groups consolidate individual memories into a shared narrative, shaping their identity and collective experience. This interdisciplinary field examines how memories are formed, preserved, and transmitted within societies, encompassing a range of concepts from family memory to national and cultural memory. (source: Walker, Katherine, EBSCO Research Starters Home)

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INTRODUCTION

Bodies, stored trauma, archives, Ukrainian heritage and colonialism are not necessarily an obvious combination. Neither are they a simple one; nevertheless, through discussion, personal reflection and collected experiences, we have found interconnected links between these topics. Our goal was never to solve one issue but rather to investigate and question, develop methods for inquiry into topics that are simultaneously incredibly personal and hold collective significance. This research had two main inputs, which existed separately before SoC and perhaps will take on different (individual or collective) forms beyond the programme. What connected us is our motivation to look deeper into our respective topics with unexpected inputs from each other and our peers. Hence, an unobvious combination of topics and methodologies.

This text is divided into three main parts: Question 1 - a contextual introduction and description of archival input, Question 2 - a contextual introduction and description of trauma and the role of somatic practice, Experiments - a recollection and description of our experiments and Conclusion, which situates our impressions and findings, exploring further potential directions and subtopics this process has since inspired.

Question 1. How do we address issues of memory and generational trauma, in the context of modern Ukrainian identity and colonial heritage? (Alisa Probylova)

Our memory not only stores past information somewhere safe, but it is also a tool that helps us navigate the present. Just like an archive is not just a storage room with files, it is a particularly active and political space. Memory and intuition play a fundamental role in our understanding of ourselves. Similarly to how our archives store our documented past, which we use to explain, justify, or even defend our present. Ukrainian collective memory holds significant traumas. Stories of the Holodomor (Famine) of 1932-1933, the Soviet man-made famine targeting Ukrainians, still influence habits and attitudes toward food and resources. The Executed Renaissance, Ukrainian modernist artists of the 1930s–40s, were erased almost completely from our archives but not from our memories. Due to imperial and Soviet language policies for decades, it was prohibited to publish officially in Ukrainian, yet we still speak the language. However, Ukrainian archives are the opposite: due to many years of Russian efforts to erase our culture, our archives have been burned, stolen, and meddled with, and therefore our traumas are rarely documented.

Not so long ago, our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were witnesses to these extremely tragic events in the history of the Ukrainian people. Today, we are still dealing with the consequences and lasting effects of those tragedies. Through years of colonisation and russification, Russia has been trying to erase Ukrainian identity in its entirety. Which is why today more than ever it is important for us to tap into our memory, shared and individual traumas, not only to release past personal traumatic experiences but be able to decolonise ourselves and our heritage.

In a series of experiments, discussions and an ongoing process of research, we look at how to address the intersection of our colonial heritage, trauma, and memory. Our motivation is shared, however, our backgrounds and working methods and mediums are different. This is where our unique methodology comes from. We combine conceptual and practical ideas of an Archive - a symbolic and metaphoric comparison with memory is hard to miss, in practice, public and personal archives are great tangible sources for inquiry into history. Another layer of our work is somatic practices and communal play as a method to address stored trauma. Further in the text, this aspect is discussed as Body as an Archive.

Our research is rooted in the context of Ukrainian history, although it is not limited to it. Instead of only evaluating our collective memory, we also refer to our personal experiences, family archives and bodies.

Question 2. Body as an archive? How to work with the archive of trauma? (Kateryna Vavrynchyk)

The connection to the body came out of our personal experience with traumas. Understanding the difficulties of our past and present, and literally feeling it in our bodies in the form of spasms and blocks, we tapped into somatic and psychological approaches towards the topic of memory and trauma. As ARCHIIIVE research project members, all of us share two layers of trauma: collective and personal. The collective layer harbours our generational trauma from colonialism, repression, famine, topped up with the outbreak of the full-scale invasion in Ukraine in 2022. As for the personal layer of trauma, each of us had our own difficulties in life - burnouts, abuse, migration, and losses. According to the medical research of Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk (an author of "The Body Keeps the Score") specialised in trauma therapy, our memory of the traumatic experience is stored in the prefrontal cortex of the brain. In order to save us and let us live further, our brain protects us, pushing the painful memory away from our consciousness. This is why solely talking about these experiences is not helpful, as, in fact, we cannot fully access these memories verbally. However it is proven that besides EMDR, somatic therapy and communal play are the ways to tap into these memories. While facing them, it is essential to go through the process of integration: becoming whole with your experiences as well as the experiences of your family members, releases stored energy. Storing traumatic energy in our bodies causes us a lot of damage. Ignoring or avoiding it leads to various chronic

symptoms, including fatigue, muscle tension, nausea and depression. Apart from that, traumatic experiences tend to isolate us, making us feel lonely in our heaviness. This is why we especially value the collective practice of somatic rituals. Given all that, in our research, we aim to find tools that can help us liberate our bodies from the emotions being stuck. We were happy to facilitate two workshops, which included engagement of voice, movement, breath-work, and Ukrainian traditional rituals.

EXPERIMENTS

2.1

The first workshop took place during the intensive knowledge exchange weekend with all the participants of School of Commons 2025. There we focused on calming our psyche with a square breath technique, localising the stuck emotion in our body, and releasing it with voice, creating a so-called Collective Trauma Orchestra.

After that, one after one, participants were invited to draw the located and sensed negative memory on paper. Using handed-out pencils, paint and tools, we created a collective trauma mapping, which we analysed together while reflecting upon it. The workshop continued with a playful distraction intervention, which aimed to shift our focus, followed by a positive memory mapping. Voicing and drawing how we felt in our happiest moments, participants could see the difference of the body that appeared on paper.

2.2

Our second experiment took place during the Solidarity With Ukraine Festival DACH, organised by our 380 Collective in September. It was a participatory "relaxed" (join in, leave freely) workshop on singing Ukrainian traditional songs as a collective ritual on mourning and strengthening. The workshop was led by a Ukrainian female group Chorni Halky, specialised in singing eastern and southern/northern folk songs. Given that Ukrainian culture and folklore were systematically repressed by russia, and are currently being practiced again, we see a big value in preserving these traditions and rites. One of them is collective singing. The workshop participants were invited to sing Ukrainian songs and join in the collective energy vibration produced by the voices. After singing, the group introduced a playful folk game, including movement and togetherness.

2.3

"Interview" with family members

As previously mentioned, our research includes working with private archives. This oral experiment is a rather simple exercise - talking to family members about their history. However, it is significantly more complicated once traumatic memory gets in the way. "I don't remember," "It was a long time ago," are phrases often used by people who are not ready to dive deep into these memories. Not out of negligence or lack of interest, but perhaps out of the need to protect oneself.

Such simple exercises, however, lead to significant findings. Often it leaves with more questions than answers, unfinished stories, and loose ends.

To (sort of) structure this experiment, each of us talked to a family member and/or looked for an artifact. Topics of the "interviews" varied, some were focused on the reality of life in the soviet union (trauma), more on the expression of Ukrainian identity during Soviet times (which was often forbidden) and others on family history: how did we end up in this city? The result of this experiment provided an input from the past, which we continue to work on further.

A text, shared by one of us, recalling the experience of "interviewing" family members. (Oleksandra Tsapko)

This August I went back to Ukraine for the fifth time since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Every time, it brings up complex and conflicting feelings: returning to a place that carries an odd sense of comfort combined with excruciating fear.

This time, I decided to do it differently -to transform this comfort into something slightly uncomfortable. I am still not sure whether those emotions were only mine or also belonged to the people I interviewed.

I spoke with my grandparents on my father's side. I talked to them about their past. Before, there was never a concrete sense of where they came from or why they were the way they were. They had always existed simply as "granddad and grandma" -an eternal presence without a backstory or an unexpected sequel.

It turned out that both my grandmother, born in Western Ukraine, and my grandfather, born in Southern Ukraine (which has been illegally occupied since 2014), moved to the capital as teenagers in search of better opportunities, carrying bright minds and big hopes. After finishing school and university, they found respectable jobs as a scientist and an architect, and then my father was born. Still, it was far from a stable or ideal family life -Soviet times were not easy for anyone.

My grandmother never once mentioned how hard it had been, how, despite having decent jobs, they could barely afford food and other basic necessities, not to mention new clothes or leisure.

Now, memories from my childhood make sense to me: the endless plastic yogurt cups and plastic bags stuffed inside more plastic bags at my grandparents' home. Back then, we might have called it hoarding, which now seems almost ridiculous.

Clearly, it was a coping mechanism -a way to deal with the recurring instability of the world.

My grandfather, on the other hand, revealed his deepest frustration: that he can no longer return to his homeland, the place that had always been an escape for him, where he could finally feel at ease. Then he showed old photographs and videos from before 2014. Everything felt brighter and

warmer; not only the moving images on the dim computer screen, but also the look in his eyes.

Then came the story of their apartment -the apartment that was my father's home, and later my brother's and mine during our childhood. They told me how injustice almost erased it from our lives. My granddad had helped with an architectural project, after which he was promised an apartment as payment. But once the building was finished and ready to move into, the promise was suddenly forgotten. If not for one person in a position of power who fought for justice, my father, my brother, and I would never have had that home.

Corruption is still painfully relevant today, but back then there was not even public exposure or outrage. It was simply the norm.

They shared more tender stories about the time we lived with them. It made me wonder how we are, in fact, part of their story. How we shaped and changed each other. Their pain passed through us, digested in our bodies and reflected back at them. Could we then say that not only does the past form the future, but the future also forms the past, which later forms the future again? I'm not sure yet.

2.4

After inquiring into personal history, we again switch to collective memory and shared heritage. During the DACH festival organised by 380 Collective in Zentralwäscherei on 28.09.2025, we hosted a lecture and an open discussion with Maksym Eristavi, Ukrainian researcher, historian, and the author of "Russian Colonialism 101." Through a theoretical input by Eristavi and a discussion with listeners, we gained a new perspective. The questions that the audience were interested in often dealt with how to approach the remains of russian colonialism in modern day, such as for example the "cult of great russian culture" and how it used to justify many things, including irresponsible musical programming (Zürich opera hosting a pro-Putin singer who uses Ukrainian tragedies for personal promotion) or collaboration with Russian artists in general.

Eristavi's input strengthens our connection to our context; it ties together our experienced memories and historic collective memories. Additionally, he focuses on the stolen Ukrainian artists (and more) that are referred to as "Russian". This input inspires further exploration of archives now as a tool for change and practical decolonisation. Further, this topic is discussed in the conclusive chapter and referred to as the Decolonizing Wikipedia Workshop.

CONCLUSION

Bringing this project into the context of this year's cohort of School of Commons has definitely been fruitful, especially in terms of discovering new perspectives and ways of working together inside of our collective and as a part of a larger working group. This is an ongoing research project, it may change shape and format. We do not intend on stopping here or proposing a conclusive answer, as it was never our intention. With knowledge and experience gained on collective trauma and collective dealing with trauma, as well as inquiries into personal history and archives we scratched the surface of developing tools for dealing with trauma, memory, and heritage. Currently, there are two new directions for exploration:

Exploring and reviving traditional mourning practices. By using our findings during the singing workshop and trauma workshop with the SoC intensive as a foundation, we want to expand the research into historic notions of mourning laments and their potential as a somatic collective practice. Another direction we are ready to explore was discovered during Maksym Eristavi's lecture. In his input, he talks about stolen Ukrainian artists. With this as inspiration, our conceptualisation of an Archive and inquiry into colonial heritage, we want to design a tool for practical decolonisation.

From symbolic and private archives, we want to transition into a publicly accessible and digital environment. In terms of digital archives, Wikipedia immediately comes to mind. An open-access digital platform designed for knowledge sharing and co-editing currently hosts biased and untrue information about Ukrainian artists. As previously noted, for many decades, a key objective of both the Russian Empire and the Soviet regime was to eliminate traces of traditional Ukrainian culture and modern identity. The consequence of this effort is still present in Wikipedia, and other digital and analogue sources. Designing and facilitating a participatory tool to change that, would be our next goal. This may take shape in a workshop format; luckily, Wikipedia is still an open source platform which allows for user-initiated change in the content.

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COLOUR

AN INCLUSIVE VISUAL LANGUAGE FOR CLIMATE COMMUNICATION

by Yue Wu & Liliana Scapucci

Through interdisciplinary collaboration between science and art, this lab demonstrates how the gap between complex scientific data and public understanding can be effectively bridged.

Yue Wu is an artist and eco-feminist with a Master of Fine Arts, a Bachelor of Fine Arts, and a Bachelor of Science. Her artistic practice spans live performance, multimedia installation, and ink painting. Through her writing, she explores the narratives and cultural expressions of Chinese women within transmigrant communities. Her recent research centers on sustainability in the arts through interdisciplinary collaborations with scientists.

Liliana Scapucci is a post-doctoral researcher with an interdisciplinary background in ecology, atmospheric science, and ecosystem management, which was developed thanks to an international education setting in Italy, Portugal, Denmark, and Switzerland. Liliana centers their work on the responses of forest ecosystems to climate change, with a focus on the carbon dioxide uptake and emissions under global warming while keeping a systemic approach that emphasises the interplay of multiple living organisms.

One of Liliana's favorite challenges is to convey complex scientific topics to a non-scientific audience through accurate research on visual communication.

Project partners: Iris Feigenwinter, Yi Wang, Sabina Keller, Susanne Burri, Nina Buchmann

GLOSSARY TERM "Destiny-commons"

Destiny is shared rather than individually owned, environmental change has cross-generational and cross-species impacts, humans and nature are embedded in an interdependent web of ecological outcomes, and every action reverberates within this communal field of fate.

In essence, Destiny-commons expresses the idea that our fate is deeply connected with the fate of the natural world.

This project focuses on how to effectively visualise environmental science data through colours for climate communication. It follows three research trajectories.

This article requires full-color imagery to accompany the text. For all images, please refer to the Color Image Plates chapter.

1. COLOUR IS CLOSELY LINKED TO HUMAN EMOTION.

As an integral aspect of both natural and constructed environments, colour carries aesthetic appeal, with certain colours being perceived as more pleasant than others. Further research shows that humans systematically and reliably associate colours with emotions (Jonauskaite et al., 2025). Precisely because colour possesses this power to transcend language and access perception and emotion directly, this project employs colour as the core element to design visual tools that move beyond the barriers of text and graphs. This approach aims to break through the traditional barriers of climate communication, trigger emotional responses, and thereby deepen public engagement with climate issues.

This inclusive engagement must specifically prioritise communities most vulnerable to the climate crisis, as its impacts disproportionately affect marginalised groups. Their vulnerability stems from intersecting factors such as geographic location, financial and socio-economic status, cultural and social conditions, limited access to resources and services, and restricted decision-making power (World Bank, 2025). Our primary objective is to use colour visualization to make climate information as clear, simple, and accessible as possible, with the focus on helping the groups most affected by the climate crisis to understand it and overcome the barriers they face.

2. INCLUSIVE DESIGN THROUGH COLOUR.

The scientists of the ETH Zürich Grassland Sciences Group have done excellent work in measuring fluxes, directly and continuously quantifying the net exchange of CO2 between terrestrial ecosystems and the atmosphere using the eddy covariance technique, amassing rich long-term datasets.

And our core challenge is to select colours that can transform vast, abstract flux data into visuals which the public can grasp and connect with. This involves a deliberate choice of colours based on three key criteria: their accessibility for colour-blind viewers, their inherent emotional resonance, and their ability to convey meaning across cultural barriers.

Guided by these criteria, our final approach is to visualise each flux or environmental variable using a pair of contrasting hues to represent an opposing process or condition.

All colour palettes were selected to be distinguishable for individuals with red-green or tritanopia colour blindness. Furthermore, CMYK colour codes were specified for all selections to guarantee consistency in print reproduction and to facilitate wider adoption of the designed visual system.

Figure 1: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Colour codes for the data visualisation of net ecosystem CO2 exchange (NEE). Colour codes are expressed in CMYK to ensure consistency in print.

Green and violet hues represent CO2 uptake and release, respectively (Fig. 1). Green was chosen to represent CO2 uptake, inspired by photosynthesis -the process in which plants use sunlight to convert CO2 and water into oxygen and organic compounds.

View video "Forest in Tampere Seitsemisentie" online at https://youtu.be/PWRB9RiBvg0?si=Li3Bli6cNBnlx7TE

In winter, when leaves fall and carbon fixation decreases, violet was selected to represent the predominant ongoing release of CO2. This choice draws direct inspiration from the subtle violet hues in Claude Monet's Lavacourt under Snow (ca. 1878–1881), which masterfully captured the cold, reflective quality of a snow-covered landscape -a season of heightened atmospheric CO2. This artistic observation is grounded in historical climate reality: the painting likely depicts the exceptionally cold winter of 1879/80 (The National Gallery, 2024). Thus, Monet's violet palette does more than capture a visual mood; it documents a specific climatic condition that directly correlates with the season of ecosystem dormancy and sustained CO2 release that our data depicts.

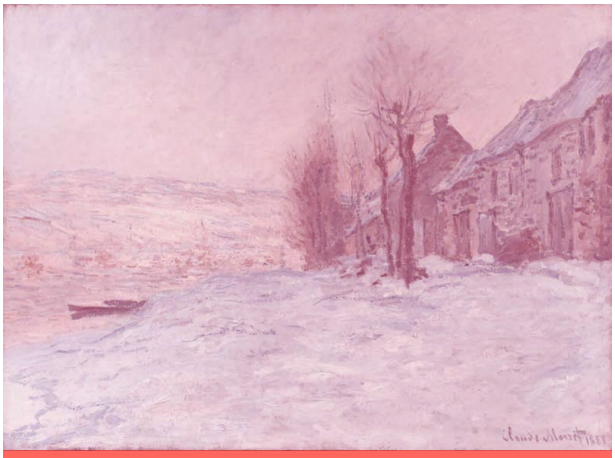

Figure 2: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Claude Monet, Lavacourt under Snow (ca. 1878–1881). Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

The combination of green and violet is not only visually striking but also deeply rooted in cultural history, which lends it profound narrative power for communication. This duality is powerfully exemplified in two iconic works. In Sir John Everett Millais's Ophelia (1851–52), violet functions on multiple levels: realistically in the shadows of her silver-embroidered dress, and symbolically in the ring of violets around her neck -a traditional emblem of faithfulness, chastity, and death (Easby, Harris, & Zucker, 2025). Enveloped by a profusion of meticulously rendered green plants, her drowned figure embodies a rebellion against Shakespearean gender norms (Kottas et al., 2018), visually intertwining her fate with the natural world that both surrounds and claims her. Similarly, the witch in

Disney's Sleeping Beauty wields her power cloaked in purple, casting spells amidst roaring green flames, a visual code that explicitly links the colour pair to potent, transgressive agency.

Figure 3: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Sir John Everett Millais, Ophelia (ca. 1851–52). Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

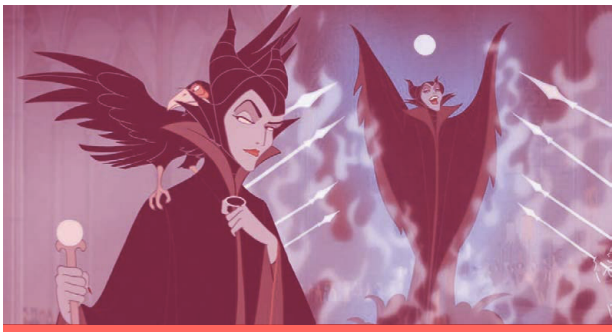

Figure 4: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Marc Davis, Sleeping beauty (1959). Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

From an ecofeminist perspective, such recurring imagery critically intertwines the destinies of women and nature, framing both as entities often silenced, exploited, or deemed "hysterical" within patriarchal frameworks (Kottas et al., 2018; Priyadarshini, 2025). By consciously adopting this historically and symbolically charged colour pair (green/violet) to depict the natural carbon cycle (uptake/release), our visualisation intentionally echoes and repurposes these deeper cultural narratives. It invites viewers to see beyond abstract data points, connecting the essential fluxes of ecosystems to broader, more resonant themes of life, dormancy, resilience, and the urgent need for attentive care.

Figure 5: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Colour codes for the data visualisation of precipitation. Colour codes are expressed in CMYK to ensure consistency in print.

The yellow to Prussian-blue gradient (Fig. 5) indicates an increase in daily rainfall. Blue, first used around 2600 BCE (Muntwyler, 2022, p. 243), has long represented water, the sky, and the ocean across cultures, making it an intuitive representation of precipitation. Beyond this universal symbolism, blue accrued deeper layers of meaning in modern cultural contexts, acquiring utopian and spiritual connotations. Particularly from Romanticism onward, in response to anxieties about rationalist domination and a loss of individuality at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, blue -as the colour of sky, ocean, and fluidity -became a key reference for expressing immaterial ideals. This tradition, extending from the Expressionist group Der Blaue Reiter (1911) to Bertolt Brecht's ironic "blue moon" in "Memory of Marie A" (1927), persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Doran, 2013, p. 9).

Figure 6: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Franz Marc, Blaues Pferd I (1911). Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

This conceptual grounding of blue is further reinforced by its fundamental opposition to yellow within colour theory. In Goethe's framework, yellow and blue are positioned as the lightest and darkest poles of the spectrum, forming a primary dialectical pair. He theorised that colour emerges from the resolved tension between light and darkness, with yellow representing light tempered by darkness. This polar relationship generates visual and conceptual intensification inherent to nature's principle of polarity and visualised in the colour circle, where opposites like blue and yellow "reciprocally evoke each other in the eye." (Doran, 2013, p. 8).

Such opposition extends beyond theory, anchoring itself within the respective art histories of both colours. Yellow ochre, classified among the naturally occurring "earth colours" derived from materials such as iron-oxide clays (Winsor & Newton), is one of humanity's oldest pigments—used in rock art, pottery, wall paintings, cave art, and tattoos dating back to 300,000 BC (Hirst, 2019). It is no accident that since the 2nd century BCE, yellow has been the most revered colour in China, representing "earth" -an element esteemed for its vastness and its capacity to nurture and sustain all life (Chen, 2015, p. 76).

Interestingly, yellow's symbolic potency in the West mirrors this complexity through its inherent duality. Historically, it has been the colour of light, illumination, enlightenment, and gold (absolute value), yet equally the colour of death, decay, and excrement (a figure of negativity) (Doran, 2013, p. 8). Thus, unlike the binary opposition of black and white, yellow contains contradiction within itself -a point articulated by Goethe in his Theory of Colours (1810).

Therefore, the yellow-blue gradient in our visualisation is justified not only by its immediate intuitive reading (earth/aridity to water) and its grounding in colour theory, but also by the rich, dialectical -and often internally conflicted -cultural narratives that each hue carries, together forming a sophisticated and resonant semantic pair for communicating environmental change.

Figure 7: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Colour codes for the data visualisation of vapour pressure deficit (VPD). Colour codes are expressed in CMYK to ensure consistency in print.

Periwinkle and orange hues represent the transition from low to high vapour pressure deficit (VPD), linked to a shift from high to low relative humidity (Fig. 7). While VPD is linked to precipitation, it also increases with temperature. Orange was selected for high VPD (i.e., low relative humidity) both because it approximates the colours associated with low precipitation (yellow) and high temperature (red), and to ensure clear differentiation among environmental variables. Furthermore, orange and periwinkle are among the most common flower colours in nature; this contrasting pair was specifically chosen to avoid colour-blind confusion. Orange tones in plants arise from carotenoid reflection, while blue to violet tones result primarily from anthocyanins (Welsch, 2004, p. 243). We believe that the deep-seated cognitive associations forged through prolonged interaction with nature can instinctively evoke positive emotional responses.

Figure 8: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Hibiscus. Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 9: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Periwinkle. Image source: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 10: (Refer to Color Image Plates) Colour codes for the data visualisation of air temperature. Colour codes are expressed in CMYK to ensure consistency in print.

Red and blue hues represent air temperature from high to low (Fig. 10). This design follows the Warming Stripes (2018) format developed by the British climatologist Ed Hawkins (Smith College, 2023), which has gained wide recognition and adoption due to its intuitive effectiveness. Our design decision was to retain its core blue-red color contrast to maintain visual logic and avoid cognitive confusion, while adjusting the specific hues to create a visual distinction.

RESPONDENTS GAVE POSITIVE FEEDBACK ON THE CLARITY AND RELEVANCE OF OUR DESIGN.

Through questionnaires at two public events, we collected feedback on our three explanatory posters and design materials from artists, scientists, and non-expert visitors, attending the Sustainable University Day 2024 and the School of Commons Gathering 2025.

Figure 11: (Refer to Color Image Plates) The Poster exhibited at Sustainable University Day 2024 and the School of Commons Gathering 2025.

Figure 12: (Refer to Color Image Plates) The Poster exhibited at Sustainable University Day 2024 and the School of Commons Gathering 2025.

At the Sustainable University Day on November 2024, all respondents indicated that the colours not only captured their attention more quickly but also made the corresponding scientific data easier to understand. Moreover, 95% found the colour combinations sufficiently distinguishable (n = 21).

Based on 17 valid questionnaires collected at the School of Commons Gathering on 3 July 2025, 76.5% of respondents found the colour combinations appealing (n = 17); 82.4% reported no difficulty distinguishing the colours; 52.9% considered the colour combinations consistent with general cultural understanding; and 70.6% indicated increased curiosity about ecosystem responses to environmental change after viewing the poster presentation.

The positive responses gave us confidence to use this design in place of complex scientific language for climate communication. We also created postcards as gifts for the participants of the 2025 School of Commons community and for the scientists attending the Elter 2025 Science Conference. We hope that, through sharing, this visual language for climate communication will reach and be used by many more people.

Figure 13 & 14: (Refer to Color Image Plates) The postcard depicts the fluxes and climate variables of the Swiss spruce forest in Davos during 2020, located at an elevation of 1639 meters..

CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the project's initial objective—how to share climate knowledge openly and equitably—this design offers an answer centered on visual inclusivity. Proceeding along the colour theory, art-historical lineage, and practical accessibility, we have constructed not merely a set of scientific data visualizations, but a narrative tool capable of triggering emotional connection and cultural resonance.

Feedback collected from the two public events indicates that this design does enhance comprehension, spark curiosity, and demonstrate cultural inclusivity. While the initial feedback is positive, its long-term efficacy and applicability across diverse contexts require further evaluation and iteration. We look forward to collaborating with a broader community of science communicators, designers, and communities to refine and promote this visual language, ensuring it truly serves those most in need of understanding climate information, yet who are often excluded from the conversation.

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EXQUISITE COMMONS

ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

TENTACULAR ARCHIVE

by AWOL Collective with SOC 2025 Cohort

AWOL (as in Absent Without Leave) is an artistic collective committed to democratizing climate knowledge and research. AWOL engages in collaborative practices that challenge imperial frameworks and reimagine relationships with the environment as part of a shared struggle for liberation. Through interdisciplinary projects, ranging from lecture performances to on-site research and performative actions, the collective merges memory, archives and history with data and spatial analysis, crafting new narratives that bridge personal displacement with ecological crisis. Composed by Belén Arellano Cañizares, Giuliana Marmo and Stefan Ralevic.

GLOSSARY TERM "Mourning a glacier"

Mourning names a methodology for engaging with ever-changing states of time, landscape, and collective memory. Rather than signalling a fixed moment of loss, it marks a continuous practice of interpreting, and inhabiting transformation. This becomes a way to learn, for example from glaciers: a melting body whose shifting borders, sediments, and temporalities reflect layered forms of disappearance.

To mourn is neither to withdraw nor to idealize what is gone, but to acknowledge absence as an overwhelming presence, a force capable of reshaping the terrain and the political imagination. Through mourning, fiction becomes a tool for envisioning alternative realities and new forms of agency: it allows the disappearing body of the glacier to articulate itself beyond scientific measurement, beyond nationally established borders, and beyond extractive narratives of progress.

Practicing mourning means working against the paralysis often produced by scientific data and, instead, approaching climate transformation as a site of multispecies intimacy and shared vulnerability. It invites unlearning the idea of the glacier as static, remote, or solely geological, and understanding it instead as a dynamic agent of cultural, ecological, and political change. In this way, mourning opens space for imagining post-glacial futures collectively: futures that emerge not from denial or nostalgia, but from attentive coexistence with processes of loss that are already shaping our immediate world.

The following text consists of fragments retrieved from a collective narrative exercise. It works as a repository for thoughts, images, places and emotions connected to ecological change and the passage of time. The narrator is not a singular being, but a lineage, a consciousness that loops through time, observing the landscape as it freezes, melts, burns and frosts again. This collection passes through different generations, merging speculative biology with critical theory to document an underwater memory older than humans.

Sym 6, 2456

I remember when the world was ice. A blanket so vast it hid whole mountains. I drifted through **underwater currents** [1] in a chamber of cold so ancient every sound would echo for the longest time. Below me lay an old source of energy that no sunlight had touched for thousands of years, but that was capable of emanating its own warmth. All us floating beings and **lake creatures** [2] would stay together like an **orchestrated flow** [3] , **waiting for something spectacular to happen** [4] , like an orange sunset through the ceiling of ice or the sudden apparition of **eldritch** [5] beings like the **Loch Ness** [6] **monster** [7].

[1] Adapted from a fragment shared by Lou Croff Blake in the collective archive*.

[2] Adapted from a fragment shared by Guillermo Martinez de Velasco in the collective archive.

[3] The orchestrated flow in this case can be seen as a hint to Negri's understanding of the multitude, where it acts as a network of diverse struggles (e.g., class, gender, race) that fuel collective power without reducing to a single relation and enabling radical democracy via spontaneous, non-hierarchical movements like assemblies.

[4] Adapted from a fragment shared by Jere Ikongio in the collective archive.

[5] From Scots "elritch" with uncertain roots possibly from Old English elements, suggesting "otherworldly" or "foreign realm," such as æl-rīce (elf-kingdom) or a prefix meaning "strange, from elsewhere." See Alaric Hall, "The Etymology and Meanings of Eldritch," Scottish Language 26 (2007): 16–22.

[6] Adapted from a fragment shared by Layla Fassa in the collective archive.

[7] Interesting how the Latin monstrum comes from the verb monēre ("to warn/ admonish/ advise"). Monstrous creatures will guide us. See: "monster (n.)," Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. "monster."

Sym 5, 2367

With the water getting warmer and the ceiling becoming thinner, more colors would seep into the cave. Sometimes shards of ice formed skylights, and turquoise beams pierced the darkness. I discovered myself capable of producing energy, too, electrical beams would emanate from my tentacles and ripple through the frozen walls. **Hairy beings** [1] would surface from the melting depths, providing food for all kinds of flamboyant fish. The cave was lit up with all kinds of beings and all kinds of colours, fish and **seahorses** [2] would get married and their newborn sirens decorated their **parties** [3]. There was never-ending dancing to the sound of crackling and dripping, until one day the surface opened up. **A beam of warm light pierced through a star-shaped crater connecting the underworld with the breathing sun** [4].

[1] Adapted from a fragment shared by Brigitte Hart in the collective archive.

[2] This narration challenges the binary rigidity of sexual dimorphism. Hippocampus (seahorses) exhibit male pregnancy, destabilizing traditional reproductive roles present in humans. The emergence of "sirens" here suggests a radical fluidity between species and genders, found in Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Routledge, 1990.

[3] In Donna Haraway's writing, figures are often read through the lens of an anthropology of ritual, where the monstrous marks a liminal phase in rites of passage and moments when social categories loosen or invert.

[4] Adapted from a fragment shared by Jagna Nawrocka in the collective archive.

Everything tasted like iron and burnt oil. I floated near the surface, next to a **metal colossus** [5] that cut through the waves without asking for permission. On the horizon, the darkness was not night but smoke, and in the middle of the water there were foamy scars that come and go. Distant vibrations traveled through the water, not the rhythmic pounding of the earth that I know, irregular songs of **engines** [5] trying to outrun the wind. We, the drifters, felt the heat radiating from above, a fever that did not belong to the sun. The silver fish used to hide under my belly as if I could protect them from the loudness from above.

[5] Adapted from a fragment shared by someone unknown in the collective archive. Original: "sea creatures, one of them was inspired by the boat in front of us".

[6] Jellyfish spread globally via the ballast water of cargo ships, making them a passenger of global capital. These animals do not merely swim but they are transported by the very machinery that travels the oceans, embodying a parasitic resilience to the Anthropocene.

Sym 4, 2242

Above us, the silence was blinding, the air so dry it burns. An immense mass of frozen water moved like a slow giant excavating its way into a valley that might become a city. We found ourselves craving something unseen, as the first sprouts of green started to appear around us, together with **new smells, calm breeze and a meteor shower** [1]. The sirens grew legs and left to roam the land that was hidden under layers of ice. **They reached a mountain and lit a fire in a cave** [2]**, where they danced until the moon was out and the snow came down again but melted in the heat of the flames** [3]. They were the first ones to see the orange sunrise.

[1] Adapted from a fragment shared by Chantelle Lue in the collective archive.

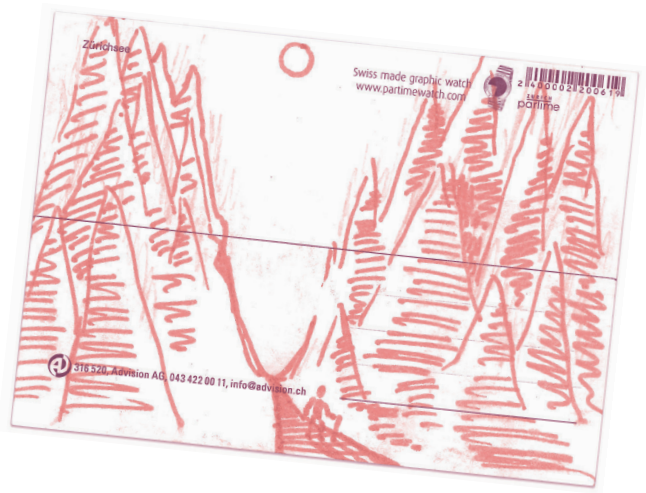
[2] The act of lighting a fire does not necessarily have to be the duality of "nature vs. culture" but the emergence of a Vibrant Matter assemblage in the words of Jane Bennett. The fire, the cave, the snow, and the sirens become a spontaneous, self-organizing agencement. The fire is an active element with agency that forces an encounter between the geological (the mountain), the atmospheric (the snow), and the biological (the sirens), thus blurring the line between passive environment and active entity.

[3] Adapted from a fragment shared by Gabriel Hensche in the collective archive.

Sym 3, 2189

Where once the frozen giant lay, there was now the deepest of valleys with the highest of mountains, the sun was hot and I could sense smoke coming from far away, seeping through the water and **filling up my belly** [1]. The warm pool where I float was constantly stirred by the ripples of boats, swimmers and **machinery** [2]. The **murmuring** [3] of hundreds of thousands living at the edge of the water felt stronger than anything else I had experienced in the depths of white where I once drifted, yet **I couldn't separate the individual sounds from each other** [4], they were as big a mass as the moving ice.

The waters were no longer locked in layers, but were released, seeking their own level and forming **stable beds and basins** [5] where before there had only been frozen potential. The air was wet again, thick with the smell of exposed earth and the fragile green pushing through the mud. The immense frozen mass left behind a cradle, a valley humming ready to welcome every creature.



[1] Illustrating Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality: the recognition that the body is not a fortress, but a porous site where the environment, toxicities, and industrial byproducts literally constitute the self. The narrator does not just observe the pollution but becomes part of it, exactly as we do.

[2] Considering that machinery implies a transition from organic nature to a "social space", as Henri Lefebvre argues, capitalism survives by actively producing spaces, turning the fluid unmapped water into a grid for transport and/or established leisure.

[3] "murmuring" as in Jacques Rancière, where it works as the threshold of politics. What could be considered mere noise turns into a relevant sign that requires recognition. It is an expression of disagreement and the sound of the excluded/unrecognized/uncounted.

[4] The narration plays with the mixing of a multitude of individuals and landscapes. Again considering the terms of Negri, many refuse to be reduced to one.

[5] Geological formations can be very varied and intriguing. An example is the so-called "giant's kettle", a glacier pothole made from the strong swirling currents of glacial water. This liquid mass mixed with debris acts as a drill that can carve out deep round shapes. This erosion also affects bigger stones that happened to be inside, making almost perfect spheres inside the kettle.

Sym 2, 2094

Then the only thing left was a crater of dry soil, red stones and exposed roots that should have never been seen, filled by a murmuring of liquid dripping and ice melting, coming from far away. Its power erased borders that disappeared under turquoise water. Animals and people crossed them like surfing a big cold wave, dispersing all across the drowning land. The glacier had now become the body holding them all afloat. Sometimes I could see **two-legged creatures** [1] running not because something chased them, but because they had finally understood how fragile the ground beneath them was. They carried a heavy, invisible weight in their chests so they only knew how to look at the retreating ice not with relief, but with a **calculation of loss** [2].

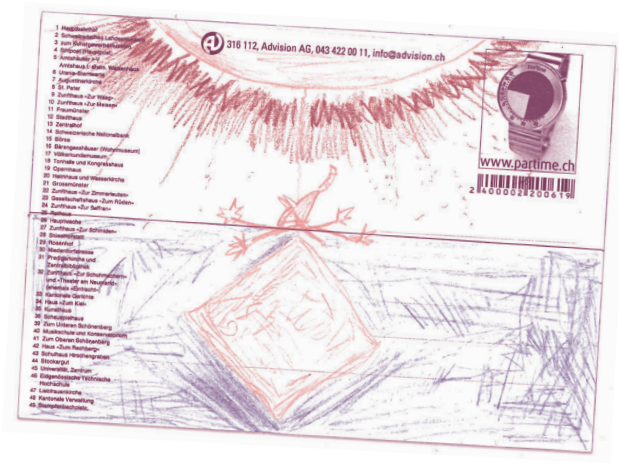
It was an era of exhaustion, where the landscape was being **skinned alive** [3]. I tried teaching them how to

[1] Adapted from a fragment shared by someone unknown in the collective archive. Original: "People are running and they are saying that they are going to die."

[2] Anxiety and speculative pessimism. Timothy Morton argues that Hyperobjects (such as a glacier) are too vast in time and space to be grasped by human senses, leading to anxiety and a useless attempt to manage the unmanageable crisis.

[3] Defining the violence of the Anthropocene, where human actions act as a geological force driven by fossil capitalism. This exploitation is theorized by Andreas Malm as the "metabolic rift" (the break between social and natural processes) driven by the acceleration of technological production.

hybridize with the corals and **the gentleness with which I travel the waters** 4, but **their own fear** 5 drowned their ears. I noticed the feathered ones above started to change their routes, **confused by the winds** 6.



4 Echoing the ethics of kinship of Donna Haraway's Chthulucene. Gentleness is here presented not as a soft virtue, but as a radical political strategy, a necessity for multispecies flourishing against the current state.

5 Regarding Rancière's theory, fear acts as the emotional mechanism that guarantees the maintenance of the Police Order (the established consensus), which dictates that only human industrial action counts as discourse. Sym's voice, advocating for multispecies kinship and an alternative mode of existence, is therefore rendered as mere noise, actively preserving a hierarchy that rejects the fundamental equality of intelligence between human and non-human life, and avoiding the disagreement that could lead to a new form of life.

6 The disruption of avian migration patterns serves as a marker of climate change and immediate balance of other species in the ecosystem. This instability is often analyzed in terms of climate precarity and the concept of "slow violence," as explored by Davies and Cloke, where environmental change, though gradual, is lethal and often dispersed across species.

Sym 1, 2025

I was born as just myself for the last time, back when they still thought there was no way of surviving. This is when I decided it was time to finally become something else: a **plurality** 1 that could travel across the unfrozen floods. We will tell the stories contained in the ice, those of **tentacular beings** 2, **unexpected bonds** 3 and wet matter seeping through every crack.

1 The decision to "become a plurality" is an act of sympoiesis (making-with), rejecting the liberal subject defined by autonomy and individuality as explored by Haraway. This move towards a decentralized, non-hierarchical collective directly challenges the reliance on singular existence.

2 Again following Haraway, tentacular thinking is understood not as a brain-bound activity but as an embodied, relational process of reaching and connecting across different species and environments.

3 Connections between species as an assemblage, defined by Deleuze and Guattari. Non-hierarchical, spontaneous collectives where heterogeneous elements connect and interact to form new patterns as a direct response to collapse, prioritizing resilience rather than isolation, and asserting a political force outside of hierarchical structures.

This narrative is a result of comparing the life cycle of the jellyfish species *Turritopsis dohrnii* to the structure of uncertain futures. Known as "the immortal jellyfish", this organism defies the direction of time by reverting to a sexually immature, colonial stage (polyp) when faced with stress or physical damage which, theoretically, renders it biologically immortal. Moreover, in this state it can reproduce by replicating its DNA, becoming hundreds of clones of itself.

We adopted the voice of Sym, a tentacular narrator inspired by an ever present entanglement and life lived along lines, more than can be counted. Sym is short for sympoiesis (Donna Haraway's term, Greek for "making-with" or "creation together") to contrast with autopoiesis (self-creation), which describes a complex system creating itself in isolation. Sympoiesis asserts that no living being creates itself alone, but always with and in collaboration with other beings and their surroundings (the landscape). This collective lineage, inspired by the The Camille Stories from

Donna Haraway, carries the memory of the ice ages, the ancient floods, and the brief civilizations through messy positionalities, as a way of making kin amongst species and environments from different positions and perspectives.

This text also contains text and images from a collective archive, created during a situated exercise done with the SoC 2025 cohort in Zurich in July of the same year, by the shore of Lake Zurich. This practice was structured as an iterative process where participants would describe a landscape, and would then pass on a variation of the narrative to the next person. Each iteration resulted in a re-description of the same location through geological time, starting in the past and ending in the future, blurring the exact moment of the "present" as this was the landscape itself.

This methodology intentionally embraces speculation, recognizing the limitations of purely quantitative data. While having crucial proximity to possible futures thanks to science, the complexity of the systems and the chaotic nature of biological and social responses mean there is always room for the unexpected. By cycling through these narrative shifts, this exercise highlights the radical uncertainty and the necessity of forging connections rather than isolated predictions.

Just as the Turritopsis travels worlds, and acts as a keeper of memories in the flesh of these worlds, we carry this question in our archive: since we know the future cannot be truly 'written,' what can we learn from the ever-changing landscapes? It is important to think what landscapes we use to think of other landscapes. Shaped by trouble, binding in trouble, and exercising trouble, together.

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EXQUISITE COMMONS

Glacier Rapport

AWOL

Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange

Hitching a Ride to Enough English

Radio-Dreaming into the Electromagnetic Commons

Shortwave Collective

Colour, an inclusive visual language for climate communication

Yue Wu, Liliana Scapucci, Nina Buchmann

Jere Ikongio

Likon'yor - knowledge production through the unseen

Nora Sobbe

Mentoring as Practice

ARCHIIIVE

(d)estructura

Common (d)estrucuras

School of Commons 2025

Colored Image Plates

Notes on Practicing Family

Caro Bodensteiner

Seeds for Survival at the Edge of the Desert

LIOS Labs

School of Commons 2025

Exquisite Commons

Sala de Tē

Tensile Paradise Field Manual

Ula Liagaitė

Sitting on a Chair

CHIMERA

A Somatic Practice of Multiplicity

Broudou School

ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

RADIO-DREAMING

INTO THE ELECTROMAGNETIC COMMONS

by Shortwave Collective

Shortwave Collective is an international feminist artist group using the radio spectrum as artistic material. We spend time together remotely and in hybrid forms, making, testing, and sharing. Through this collective practice, we have created a new design for a homemade, ecological, and open radio receiver that connects the listener to a fusion of natural radio emissions and many human-generated transmissions. A year after our founding, we published this design in MAKE magazine (2021) and have since delivered workshops nationally and internationally, developing new models through a participatory practice.

During our public art project *Living Radio Lab* as part of Struer Tracks Biennial for Sound and Listening (2023), we invited festival-goers and local residents to develop simple amplifiers in oyster shells with us. We recently published reflections on our methodology for radio-listening as a plural, situated, and embodied endeavour in *Bodies of Sound: Becoming a Feminist Ear* (eds. Revell & Shin, 2024). We also shared our collective listening practice in a 22-hour radio broadcast for Radio Art Zone (2022), a 24-hour transmission for PAM Common Art Collective (2025), and a piece for BBC Short Cuts (2025).

GLOSSARY TERM "Radio"

Radio exists as both a noun and a verb. Radio (noun) most often refers to a device you listen to (a radio receiver) and the content you are listening to (a radio broadcast). Radio (verb) can also be a method of communication i.e. information can be 'radioed' somewhere. Both these 'radio's consist of radio waves - they are a set of frequencies on the electromagnetic spectrum. Also known as carrier waves. They allow audio, images, and other data to hitch a ride and travel across the globe, bouncing through the electrosphere to reach vast distances. They are immaterial and always in plural; they existed in natural form not only pre- human technology but pre- human, as cosmic radiation from the Big Bang or bursts of energy emitted by solar storms and lightning. Post- human technology, radio has become a place, an invisible territory as well as a material object. We listen frequency by frequency (BBC Radio 4 at 92-95 FM), or arrange to meet on a wavelength (Citizens Band radio on 11 metres). Sections of radio spectrum are allocated to specific users or sold to highest bidders. Radio (verb and noun) is everywhere and always already at work. It is both singular and plural, a thing and a non-thing, a method, a mode, a place, a commodity, a property, a thing with properties, an energy from the Earth and from space, an echo from the past, all at the same time.

ORIENTATION

Electricity and magnetism weave and shift around us, through us and with us, during every moment of every day. Electromagnetism is a hybrid energetic relationship that allows humans to send and receive information wirelessly, such as sound (i.e. terrestrial radio), image (i.e. TV and satellite), or data (i.e. Wi-Fi), both locally and globally. When we send information, we are attaching it to a set of radio waves on a chosen frequency, using electromagnetic energy to carry our signals imperceptibly through the air.

These useful waves have been partitioned into 'bands' of frequencies by international coordination and national regulations. Bands are allocated for different purposes, such as broadcasting, aviation, mobile networks, satellites, and amateur communications. Though electromagnetic waves are infinite, the range of their frequencies is finite, making the spectrum a valuable - and political - resource. Corporations that rely on radio waves for their technological products (mobile networks, satellite firms, etc.) lobby governments to prioritise their use. As such, control over frequency allocation is a technical, cultural, and a political issue. However, electromagnetism is a natural phenomenon that existed long before human activity and will exist long after.

Our collective engages with radio waves, one section of the vast electromagnetic spectrum, as a compelling artistic material, both poetic and political. It is an invisible, shapeshifting, and enigmatic phenomenon that has long-whispered to us in dreams, danced the aurora on dark horizons before our eyes, and makes the hairs on our neck stand with unseen sensory information that, among other things, can foretell the arrival of storms. One of our primary activities since we began working together in 2020 is the construction of homemade devices sensitive to radio waves. We make what we call Open Wave-Receivers (Shortwave Collective, 2021), which listen for a broad range of frequencies and translate them into sound. We forage for pieces of metal and minerals in our local environments and test their properties within the radio circuits, congregating with other radio-makers on top of hills, climbing trees and stairs in tower blocks to try and lasso a signal; to produce a snapshot of radio waves as determined by the atmospheric and geographic conditions of that moment. It's important to our collective practice that others are brought into this exploration of radio, and we find that this growing network of makers, many of whom would never have considered themselves radio-builders, allows us to create new knowledge and perspectives together.

In this collectively authored piece, through our assemblage of voices, we question how the radio spectrum is governed

1) Ivo Blackwood, *Climbing the Mount at Dusk*, 2022.

in a hyper-capitalist society, divided without community consensus into territory and terminable technology. We stand with those communities who argue that radio waves, as a natural resource, are a global commons and dream about access that is transparent and equitable. Learning from the proposals for 'electromagnetic commons' by Sophie Dyer (2017) as well as the advocacy of artist and researcher Celeste Oram (2024), our project aims to spark collective conversations on this topic and imagine how this spectrum could be thought of differently. We share the idea of a 'Carrier Bag Theory of Radio' that prioritises listening and receiving over transmission, and propose 'radio-dreaming' as a space for sensitivity to electromagnetic possibilities beyond our senses, from the stirrings of the hairs on our neck, to the prospect of interplanetary transmissions from Earth to other, and... all the things we don't know.

TERRITORY

Radio, electromagnetic ether, circulates, traverses, crosses boundaries. It's a wave that can be ridden by information intended for delivery. It's an invisible territory. Walls can only be built around radio frequencies with energy, with electrical power. The licenses that government bodies bestow around the world are theoretical. How are these information highways policed?

Even though radio can be thought of as a territory - often visualised in a cartographical form - much of the human use of radio has been for listening to sound (and sound seems a more apt way of metaphorically conceptualising radio). Sound bleeds and is transformed through materials, stirs movement through vibrations, and emphasises and distorts through its harmonics as they fill and react to space. Here is a territory that reacts, bleeds, echoes, and amplifies. Here is a territory that can be temporarily engraved with information... or maybe eternally so, if those signals happen to escape the atmosphere, and continue on into space [1].

[1] We recently discovered that transmissions on the Citizens Band (a range of frequencies varying from country to country, allowing for broadcast without a license), which are largely made up of local conversations between truck drivers or taxis, can sometimes make a much longer journey. During certain atmospheric conditions they have the potential to bypass the ionosphere, which is usually their ceiling, and broadcast out into space - forever.

Space is full of its own radio emissions. Electrons spiralling around magnetic fields in the Milky Way create 'galactic background noise'; remnant radiation from the Big Bang fills space with uniform microwaves; the sun emits bursts of radio waves during solar flares and storms; and Jupiter has its own 'radio voice' according to astronomers. Between 2012 and 2017, NASA's Van Allen Probes made recordings of 'space songs' publically available -a chirping and whistling chorus of very low frequency radio waves transduced into sound. Amateurs heard these sounds too, pointing DIY radio receivers at the sky during the solar maximum of 1989 and onwards [2].

Alongside these natural phenomena and terrestrial radio bleeds, powerful nation states own radio networks designed specifically for space. The largest, NASA's Deep Space Network (DSN), communicates with spacecraft up to 20 billion kilometers away. Tracking complexes house their giant antennas, positioned at 120 degree intervals around the planet (at the outskirts of Madrid, California, and Canberra), to maintain contact as the planet rotates, since radio waves can only travel in straight lines.

Radio transmissions in deep space are just as regulated as those on Earth. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a United Nations agency, allocates frequency bands for all radio communications. Deep space transmissions are sent on the X-band and received on the Ka-band, with 70-meter dishes digging through cosmic radio noise to detect signals as weak as those produced by a small phone charger. Both nation states and private companies (e.g., SpaceX) can access these channels under agreements or contracts. Should we gain access to other planets, it is radio technology that will be used for communication both with exploring astronauts and for transmitting to other lifeforms. Terrestrial radio may, again, reach the extra-terrestrial. In this way, radio has long been an integral part of our interplanetary dreaming of communicating with worlds beyond ours.

2) NASA, *Dawn in the Apollo Valley*, 2012.

If radio operates in the background - either as a means towards other ends, or as cosmic radiation filling the universe, who or what is in the foreground? When space is an extended field-of-play for humans, we challenge Earth-centric attitudes where we can endlessly litter space with our radio transmissions. Perhaps our martian counterparts are just beginning to receive our radio transmissions, after they have travelled through the ether for a hundred years to finally reach a lifeform sensitive to it, they are now receiving a hundred years of human transmissions, getting slowly bombarded into a climax, where every milliHertz of frequency is brimming with transmissions at all times...

DIY ALTERNATIVES

In opposition to the clean, strong, regulated signal sent by government and commercial entities, sits the vaporous, cosmic haze of electromagnetism, two sides of the same coin. Against the privileged, exclusive, and operational need to listen, lies the poetic mystery, curiosity, and the equal right to listen together. Opposite the sophisticated tracking complexes and the advanced technical installations, pose the homemade receiver designs made out of everyday materials and recycled debris. The calculated, ominous 'Space Songs' on the one side co-exist with the open, fun, and collaborative listening happenstances of the other side.

The precise listening of a scientific reception becomes ambiguous when met with the turbulent porousities/ porous-sites of the Open Wave-Receiver. The cartographic accuracy becomes unrelated to the phantasmic embodiment of an openly-received signal. An act of unknowing and figuring out is taking place. Any effort to distinguish and compartmentalise is futile. And yet, an understanding and a connection is shaped through making, trying, failing, and trying again. An alternative and empowering kind of engineering is being developed, a co-learning through making and innovating.

The gated electromagnetic bureaucracies sit against a kind of commons where knowledge is open, customisable, in perpetuity, and growing from within the different communities of everyday people who tap into the world of DIY reception through participating in our workshops driven by playfulness, exploration, creativity, communication, and co-creation. Our praxis is ephemeral, plural, and fragile.

Against the backdrop of the capitalistic takeover of the perfectly free, natural, and ancient resource of the radio spectrum, it's strangely easy to build a radio. To put some copper into something resembling a particular circuit formation (this part seems to be oddly and remarkably changeable), convert the mute radio waves into sound waves we can hear, and listen in on a speaker or some headphones. You might hear a local AM station, news in a language you don't understand, the mwehp-mwehp-mwehp of someone getting a text message, sport, textures of static, or sferics: bursts of energy from near or faraway lightning. The radios we build together are un-tuned, so we can hear all of the above in one go, or more, or less. It is beautiful, multi-layered, changeable, minutely local but intricately connected to the global, sometimes confusing, and very, very DIY. Uncontrollable. Yet the more we learn about radio, the more complicated and entangled it becomes.

Simply spiraling copper creates a receptive magnetic field. Spacing these thin strands of metal ever so slightly apart,

[2] See, for example, Stephen P. McGreevy's recordings on Soundcloud. Mysteriously, this 'chorus' sound has died off in recent years (Kemp-Welch and Sanders, 2025).

the copper can form the seething, free wheeling, vibrating, non-aligning electrons into vibrating waves. The diameter and length of the spiral create a kind of buoyancy. Which frequency will it float or sink? Sounds delve under the background radiation, then emerge from it. Certain coil lengths and widths welcome more uncertainty... They catch on the slope, the runoff where one frequency bleeds into another, intended for delivery.

3) Shortwave Collective, *Buinho Rock Coil*, 2021.

CARRIER BAGS

What we have come to label as 'radio' exists as both a noun and a verb. It refers to the device you can listen to (a receiver), the category of content you are listening to, and a method of communication, i.e. information can be 'radioed' somewhere. Although, before we were able to load up radio waves with our information, it still existed in its own immaterial and natural form before human technology. Since human technology, radio has also almost become a place, an invisible territory as well as a material commodity. So it is both a thing, a non-thing, a method, a mode, a commodity, and a place all at the same time.

In anthropologist Elizabeth Fisher's book Woman's Creation: Sexual Evolution and the Shaping of Society the chapter 'Carrier Bag Theory of Evolution' (1975), argues that carrier bags, nets and baskets predated spears and clubs, offering a cultural evolutionary perspective of collection and reception over forceful and propelling action. Fisher's theory brings to mind that radio, in its radical state and essence, is the movement of two energetic forces (electricity and magnetism), and was received long before it was transmitted by humans. In its primal reception, it has interacted with our whole planet and beyond, in ways that are most often beyond our senses, and our total environment has been its container. The electromagnetic force of lightning and other forms of natural radio initiate powerful surges into soil which activate mycelial networks, boosting nitrogen fixation and resulting in greater yields of mushrooms. Thunderstorms and lightning also form the Earth's global electric circuit, while lightning both acts to form the ozone layer and produces chemicals that clean it.

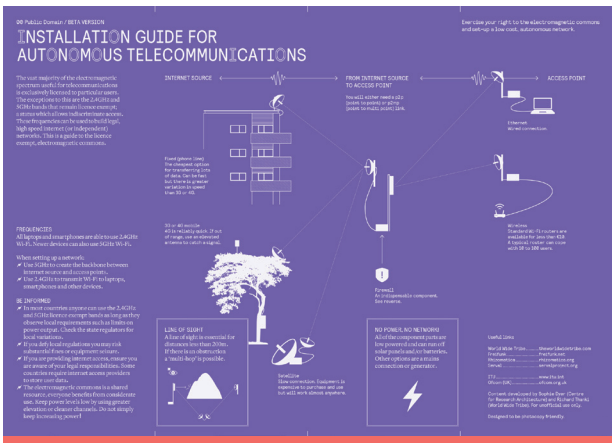
In her essay *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (1988), inspired by Fisher's theory, author Ursula K. Le Guin posits that the evolution of our collective cultural narrative inaccurately upholds and prioritises bombastic heroisms of violence and weapons of domination, and poignantly suggests that these narratives were in fact preceded by humble, quieter stories of survival rooted in the undramatic and unmemorable acts of collecting oats and seeds. We would like to extend their theories of carriers and containers (receivers) preceding weaponry to the sphere of electromagnetism, and begin to imagine a 'Carrier Bag Theory of Radio'. This is a theory that asks us to remember our first moments of electromagnetic reception: our bodies, our cells, our scars, our poetry, our hair, the air, the mycelia, the trees, the rivers, the stars, the planets have all been vehicles and containers for radio long before impressive antennas, breakfast talk-shows, and click-bait headlines of luxury cars non-consensually deposited into outer space relaying communication back to Earth.

Scholar Fionn Bennett writes that perhaps the ancient Greek oracles were able '"to tune into" circumambient electromagnetic activity' (2019, p.229), thereby listening to the electric breath exchange between the Earth and the sky. Through meditation and diaphragmatic techniques, the oracles deliberately transformed their bodies into acoustic receivers to hear the hiss of the past and future and shared these messages with those that sought it. In more contemporary history, artist Sébastien Robert has searched archives to collect hundreds of testimonies from Arctic indigenous communities who have heard natural radio through their bodies alone, unaided by technology, listening to electromagnetic chirps and whistles coinciding with auroral displays. These accounts make a mockery of the idea of Guilliermo Marconi, first man of radio technology and its first listener, and instead open possibilities for both human and non-human entities throughout the ages finding ways to attune to these cosmic and planetary signals.

COMMONS

With this understanding of the vast, untamable flow of radio transmissions from cosmic rays and lightning, from millions of cell towers, from x-ray machines and microwave ovens, received every second by the Earth, the stars, and our bodies, the idea of controlling radio waves seems almost absurd. And yet, powerful institutions do devise and enforce radio regulations. The International Telecommunication Union debates, decides, and dictates who may use which waves, allocating bands to different services, while national administrations issue licenses, often to the highest bidders.

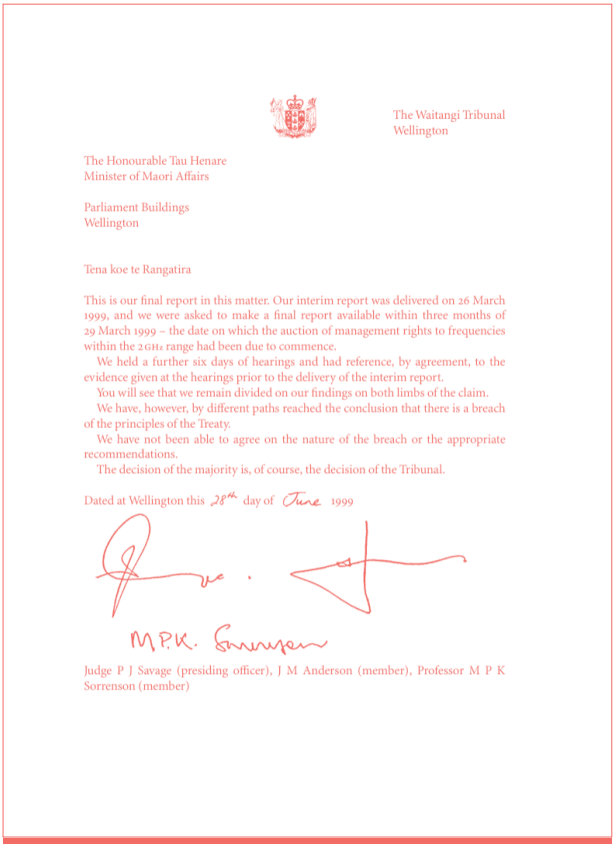
Soph Dyer, in their work on the electromagnetic commons (2017), illuminates the stark disparities embedded in these systems. Above the Calais jungle, rows of wires support networks transmitting high-speed trading data across infrared frequencies, towering over the fragile DIY networks activists set up below to provide internet access to refugees. Power here is visible in the literal height and speed of networks: ultra-fast, high-frequency infrastructure designed to generate capital soars above the low-fi networks that sustain human connection, community, and survival.



4) Soph Dyer, *Electromagnetic Commons*, 2017.

The year 2000 marked a peak in the UK's valuation of spectrum, as mobile network companies engaged in aggressive bidding for spectrum space to deploy 3G networks (Börgers & Dustmann, 2005). Just a year earlier, Māori groups had fought and won in court for 'fair and equitable access' (Culcullo, 2022) to the spectrum after being excluded from decision-making processes. Their struggle pioneered the concept of spectrum sovereignty and Indigenous rights to digital infrastructure – a fight that continues to resonate for communities around the world, asserting that access to radio waves is not merely technical, but deeply political and cultural. In an excerpt from The Waitangi Tribunal Report (1999, p.41), which auctioned 'management rights to frequencies within the 2GHz range':

> **'[The Crown did] not accept that the radio spectrum was a Maori taonga [a valued possession] in 1840 and therefore does not accept that Maori have a special right to share in the use of the spectrum... The claimants, on the other hand, say that Maori knew of the existence of the electromagnetic spectrum. Maori were aware of the existence of various natural phenomena, made good use of some of them – for instance, the use of light emitted by stars for navigation – and incorporated them into their own philosophical world view. One example of this cited by Professor Mead was Tawhaki climbing the heavens to bring to earth knowledge, education, and sacred incantations for the spiritual wellbeing of the people. Maori were therefore using radio waves for their own purposes, though they (along with all others) lacked the technology that we have today to enhance sight and sound.'**



The Waitangi Tribunal
Wellington

The Honourable Tau Henare
Minister of Maori Affairs

Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Tena koe te Rangatira

This is our final report in this matter. Our interim report was delivered on 26 March 1999, and we were asked to make a final report available within three months of 29 March 1999 – the date on which the auction of management rights to frequencies within the 2GHz range had been due to commence.

We held a further six days of hearings and had reference, by agreement, to the evidence given at the hearings prior to the delivery of the interim report.

You will see that we remain divided on our findings on both limbs of the claim.

We have, however, by different paths reached the conclusion that there is a breach of the principles of the Treaty.

We have not been able to agree on the nature of the breach or the appropriate recommendations.

The decision of the majority is, of course, the decision of the Tribunal.

Dated at Wellington this 28th day of June 1999

M.P.K. Sorrenson

Judge P J Savage (presiding officer), J M Anderson (member), Professor M P K Sorrenson (member)

5) Waitangi Tribunal Report, 1999.

In many parts of the world, a narrow band of radio frequencies are reserved for free and unlicensed public use. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the USA established the Citizens Radio Service in 1945, so that personal or small business communications could take place locally. The most commonly allocated frequency range, around 27MHz, is also known as the 11m band - one full cycle of its wavelength stretches 11 meters, but is restricted by power, thereby amplitude and reach, though radio is ultimately transnational and often leaky. Transmissions can travel as far as open space (buildings may interfere with the signal) and the power limit allows. Relays of radio signal to extend reach, both online and physical, are forbidden.

Coincidentally, every eleven years the solar cycle distorts and emphasises the reach of this band. As we are currently experiencing the height of this cycle, little low power transmissions on 27MHz have a higher tendency to travel greater distances, bouncing off the layer of charged particles in the Earth's upper atmosphere called the ionosphere in a phenomenon known as skywave propagation. This tendency for long distance travel makes the Citizens Band dense, not only with intentional local traffic but also contemporaneous interjections from far flung locations. An eleven-year season of communication choirs gather on the Fata Morgana of the radio horizon.

Regulators granted less interference-prone, more neighbourhood-travelling wavelengths for free citizen use in the 1990s. The Family Radio Service (FRS) (462 and 467MHz) was granted by the FCC in 1996 in the USA allowing for long distance walkie talkies, baby monitors, and cordless telephones without so many chances for accidental interjection. On these frequencies people are sending voices, morse code, data packets. In advanced receivers 'selective calling' can allow that only certain tones turn on a receiver. But a spoken voice on the frequency range can hit these coded tones, unintentionally opening a receiving door, a 'talk-off', a song that opens sesame.

In 1997 the European Radio Communications committee granted the Private Mobile Radio (PMR) frequencies 446MHz for license-free use in Europe, Singapore, and Malaysia. Yet FRS frequencies are illegal for unlicensed transmitters in Europe, and the PMR frequencies are illegal for unlicensed transmission in Australia, USA, and Canada, as the frequencies for emergency services, licensed amateur operators and military radar systems occupy the otherwise 'free' frequencies in the alternate territories. This lack of overlap limits possibilities for citizens to use these peak solar conditions to connect with each other globally

and experiment with possibilities for free and unlicensed long-distance communications. Such national regulatory boundaries constrain what might otherwise be a truly planetary low-power communication ecology, where citizens harness solar conditions and bypass the technologies of major corporations to communicate as they choose.

CODA

To adopt a phrase from Virginia Woolf, radio transmissions "continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately" (A Room of One's Own, 1929, p.148). In a similar manner, communities, bodies, elements, and actions learn from each other, communicate with each other, bounce off each other. We cannot extract the each from the other. They, and we, too, are bound to propagate together. In that sense, the conglomeration of these transmissions as a finite spectrum serving those with power, separated from the actual energies, elements, actions, and communities they stem from, is against their plurivocal nature. Hence making access accessible again, through this text, is to us not merely a compilation of words but a form of text as practice (Kristeva, 1984), a way of bringing the word to the foreground and aligning it with our ongoing practice. It is a collective effort to address the word within the context where our shared practice emerges from and to create a socially engaged, open discussion that listens beyond the self-referential, narrowly-subjective to the many layers of transmissions, all at once, not separately.

We invite readers to dream with us, to imagine a new relationship with radio that is situated and embodied, and deeply connected to past, present and future:

It is plural, polyvocal and therefore waves
(many waves at once)
A disturbance, a cacophony, a hypermorphology of signals and noises
A disarrangement of orders, hierarchies, and anticipations.
We value the poetic and the plural over strong signal and the clear channel. We resist the clear channel...

- Shortwave Collective and Gutiérrez, 2025

Interrupting all programs.
This is radio clash from pirate satellite,
Orbiting your living room,
Cashing in the bill of rights...
This sound does not subscribe
To the international plan,
This is radio clash using aural ammunition... Can we get that world to listen?

- The Clash, 1981

6) Chantelle Lue, *Dreaming into a Radio Wave with Shortwave Collective*, Zurich, 2025.

If we imagine, for a moment, that we have become a single radio wave, then what we are in our essence, is movement. The peaks and valleys of our wave-like existence can be huge, from the size of a cat, to a wave that is larger than our planet. As we are made of electricity and magnetism, our force, strength and shape are affected by other electricity and magnets around us, magnets such as the Earth itself, as well as the sun, the moon, the weather - and other planets, galaxies and stars. Sometimes, as a radio wave, we travel on the tails of shooting stars over incredible distances.
Where would we go, and who would we visit?

- Shortwave Collective, 2025

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EXQUISITE COMMONS

Glacier Rapport

AWOL

Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange

Hitching a Ride to Enough English

Radio-Dreaming into the Electromagnetic Commons

Shortwave Collective

Nora Sobbe

Mentoring as Practice

Jere Ikongio

Likon'yor - knowledge production through the unseen

Colour, an inclusive visual language for climate communication

Yue Wu, Liliana Scapucci, Nina Buchmann

ARCHIIIVE

Notes on Practicing Family

Caro Bodensteiner

(d)estructura

Common (d)estrucuras

School of Commons 2025

Colored Image Plates

Seeds for Survival at the Edge of the Desert

LIOS Labs

School of Commons 2025

Exquisite Commons

Sala de Tē

Tensile Paradise Field Manual

Ula Liagaitė

Sitting on a Chair

CHIMERA

A Somatic Practice of Multiplicity

Broudou School

ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

REMOVE, KEEP, DEFINE, ARRANGE.

by Klara Branting Paulsell

International Art English Version:

Branting Paulsell is a versatile researcher, writer, and performer, based between Berlin and Stockholm, with a BA from Design Academy Eindhoven. By experimenting with collective imaginations and exploring co-action, communication, and improvisation, through dialogues, translation, and audiovisual processes, they are incessantly deepening their understanding of and addiction to a tension between a radical irreverence for, and a delicate and honest approach to the English language.

A2 version:

Klara Branting Paulsell lives in Berlin and Stockholm, and has a degree from Design Academy Eindhoven. They like writing and talking to people. They love and hate English at the same time.

GLOSSARY TERM "Hitching a ride"

International Art English Version:

Hitching a ride as an artistic method, sits somewhere between a useful metaphor, like a roadmap of how to really get out there and talk to people in the flavor of a times-gone-by nostalgia, and a useful metaphor in that other sense, the one where the idea is all that counts - the image of two people with different lives and different references who can still find that common denominator to communicate the very most basic. These two ideas, or these two ways to use the methodology of hitchhiking are deeply entangled with the ideal image of the commons, especially in this case, the common language. Of course, one can extricate the one from the other, but both the quasi-instigation and the mere elucidative device ultimately rely on the convivial gesture that this phrase denotes. A gesture that, by its very nature, implies a respite from the obfuscations of elite or even colloquial speech.

A2 version:

Hitching a Ride can also be called hitchhiking. Hitchhiking is when you ask a stranger to let you ride with them in their car to somewhere they are already going. The price is only a conversation. Usually the conversation is in A2 English. The driver and the hitchhiker have different lives. They ask each other questions, and tell each other things in simple ways. Hitchhiking is a good way to learn how to talk about your work in a simple way.

This contribution "Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange." is a presentation of a method for translating so-called International Art English[1] into A2 English, developed by Klara Branting Paulsell, with the project "Hitching a Ride to Enough English" as part of the School of Commons 10-month peer learning program.

The project "Hitching a Ride to Enough English" is an exploration of the difference between functional and embellished language. The thesis of the project is that A2 English is a way of commoning language, that is based on statistics from the English Proficiency Index[2]. In recent years, English has become the most spoken language in the world, due to its role as a vehicular language. This means that English has taken on a practical role as an informative tool. In contrast, the ubiquity of so-called International Art English (also known as Art-Speak) in many if not all art, design, and other creative institutions, reveals a seemingly obtuse addiction to a labyrinthine use of complex, abstract, and, to be frank, vague language and unnecessarily long and convoluted sentence structures, not to mention words themselves.

The title for the project, "Hitching a Ride to Enough English", utilizes a useful metaphor to embody the exploration of the juxtaposition between these two literatures, the major and the minor[3], the informative and the dense; the vision of the hitchhiker as a witness to the entanglement between speculation and the real - who traverses the territory of conviviality, desire, and the commodification of reciprocity through which both the translator and the language learner must transit.

It is important to note that though the methodological spine of this project rests on the redistribution of attention, and the reduction of arbitrary assemblages of abstraction, as well as a critique of the institutional apparatus that forces this homogeneity of Art-Speak onto its practitioners, that translation into A2 entails, it is by no means a call to replace the one literature with the other. In fact, it is an invitation to both sides of the linguistic dichotomy between A2 and Art-Speak - it is a line of flight that can be followed in both directions, a deterritorialization and a reterritorialization that appears when both versions of a text are left to sit beside one another.

REMOVE

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KEEP

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1 https://canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/international_art_english

2 https://www.ef.nl/epi/

3 Deleuze and Guattari, "Kafka:Toward a Minor Literature"

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DEFINE

method - a way to do something.

commoning - making something common. See example 1 for more information.

hitchhiker/hitchhiking - when you ask a stranger to let you ride with them in their car to somewhere they are already going. The price is only a conversation. Usually the conversation is in A2 English. The driver and the hitchhiker have different lives. They ask each other questions, and tell each other things in simple ways. Hitchhiking is a good way to learn how to talk about your work in a simple way.

ARRANGE

Abstract

"Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange." is a commoning method by Klara Branting Paulsell. It is a way to say the same things in A2 English as in International Art English. International Art English can also be called Art-Speak.

Today, most art is talked about in Art-Speak, which is a kind of English. It uses long and difficult words and sentences. A2 English is the most spoken English in the world. This text is written in A2 English.

A method is a way to do something. Commoning means making something common*. "Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange." is a commoning method because it makes Art-Speak into A2 English.

People who usually speak in Art-Speak can learn to use A2 English. People who usually speak A2 English can learn to use Art-Speak.

"Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange." is part of the project "Hitching a Ride to Enough English". It is part of the School of Commons 10-month peer learning program.

Hitching a Ride can also be called hitchhiking. Hitchhiking is when you ask a stranger to let you ride with them in their car to somewhere they are already going. The price is only a conversation. Usually the conversation is in A2 English. The driver and the hitchhiker have different lives. They ask each other questions, and tell each other things in simple ways. Hitchhiking is a good way to learn how to talk about your work in a simple way.

***See example 1 for more information.**

COMMONING METHOD

Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange.

Remove words and phrases that are not A2. There is no exact definition of what is A2 so you have to just mark all words and phrases that don't seem easy, simple, and common, to you. You can reference these two lists if you want to:

Cambridge Key A2 Vocabulary List
https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/506886-a2-key-2020-vocabulary-list.pdf

Fry 1000 Sight Words
https://sightwords.com/pdfs/word_lists/fry_all.pdf

Keep words you need because they are important for the piece. It may be because there are no simple words for that specific thing, or because it is a proper noun (the name of something), or because that word is important in the context and will help the reader contextualize the text. Also keep important information in the text even if you don't keep the words it is written in.

Define any words or phrases that are not A2 but you have decided to keep.

Arrange the text so that it starts with the most simple information and ends with the most complex. Use definitions to bridge the gap. Try to keep each sentence simple and remember that it is okay to lose details and aesthetics along the way.

Try it out.

EXAMPLE 1 – FROM THE SCHOOL OF COMMONS "ABOUT" PAGE

https://schoolofcommons.org/about

School of Commons (SOC) is a global community-based initiative dedicated to peer learning, and the study and development of self-organized knowledge production—through commons-based methods and practices. Hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHDK) but the program takes place mostly online.

REMOVE

Mark all the words that need to be removed because they are not A2 words, or because they are part of phrases that are not A2 phrases. In this example takes place is marked because the phrasal verb could be replaced with a more common one.

School of Commons (SOC) is a global community-based initiative dedicated to peer learning, and the study and development of self-organized knowledge production—through commons-based methods and practices. Hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHDK) but the program takes place mostly online.

KEEP

Mark all specific words that need to be kept.

School of Commons (SOC) is a global community-based initiative dedicated to peer learning, and the study and development of self-organized knowledge production—through commons-based methods and practices. Hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHDK) but the program takes place mostly online.

DEFINE

Define the words that need to be kept, even though they are not A2.

peer - people who are on the same level as each other.

commons - something common (adjective) is something that people share - when people have interests in common, it means they care about the same things. It can also mean usual - common knowledge is something most people know.

commons (noun) are the things that everyone owns and can use in a place - like public areas, the air and water, and nature.

community - a group of people who have commons (noun), or have things in common (adjective). Everyone in the group owns the commons and has to decide how to use it, together.

ARRANGE

Start with the simplest/clearest information. Then summarize the important points by using the specific words. Then define everything that needs to be defined in order to let the reader get all the way to understanding the most important point. Then finish with that point now that the reader is ready for it.

School of Commons (SOC) is a place in the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHDK) and an online space.

It is a community of peers that are from all over the world, that learn from each other by making common.

Something common (adjective) is something that people share - when people have interests in common, it means they care about the same things. It can also mean usual - common knowledge is something most people know.

The commons (noun) are the things that everyone owns and can use in a place - like public areas, the air and water, and nature. A community is a group of people who have commons (noun), or have things in common (adjective). Everyone in the group owns the commons and has to decide how to use it, together.

Peers are people who are on the same level as each other. At the SOC, there aren't some people who make the rules and others who follow. Everyone is a teacher and everyone is a student, and the things they know are the commons.

EXAMPLE 2 – FROM THE SCHOOL OF COMMONS "PROGRAM" PAGE

https://schoolofcommons.org/program

Our 10-month peer learning program brings together practitioners, researchers, and activists from diverse backgrounds to learn from one another. The program consists of two phases: the first half is facilitated by the SOC team, while the second half is entirely participant-led, empowering the cohort to shape their own learning experience.

We invite applications from individuals and groups, regardless of their professional backgrounds. Past participants have demonstrated curiosity in sharing knowledge and a commitment to contributing to the common good. Their ongoing research is published on our website and displayed publicly, with all content freely accessible.

REMOVE

Mark all the words that need to be removed because they are not A2 words, or because they are part of phrases that are not A2 phrases. Notice at this stage how much you have to remove, and remember that sometimes it is actually a good idea to sacrifice some information.

It should be easy for the reader to understand, and that also means that the information should be short and on topic. In this example some of the information explains the program, and a lot of the information is just adding nuance and detail. Consider that nuance and detail can be removed.

Our 10-month peer learning program brings together practitioners, researchers, and activists from diverse backgrounds to learn from one another. The program consists of two phases: the first half is facilitated by the SOC team, while the second half is entirely participant-led, empowering the cohort to shape their own learning experience.

We invite applications from individuals and groups, regardless of their professional backgrounds. Past participants have demonstrated curiosity in sharing knowledge and a commitment to contributing to the common good. Their ongoing research is published on our website and displayed publicly, with all content freely accessible.

KEEP

Mark all specific words that need to be kept.

Our 10-month peer learning program brings together practitioners, researchers, and activists from diverse backgrounds to learn from one another. The program consists of two phases: the first half is facilitated by the SOC team, while the second half is entirely participant-led, empowering the cohort to shape their own learning experience.

We invite applications from individuals and groups, regardless of their professional backgrounds. Past participants have demonstrated curiosity in sharing knowledge and a commitment to contributing to the common good. Their ongoing research is published on our website and displayed publicly, with all content freely accessible.

At this point it may be helpful to mark which information you want to keep, even though you will write it in different (easier) words.

In this example, only the most vital information about the program structure is marked.

Our 10-month peer learning program brings together practitioners, researchers, and activists from diverse backgrounds to learn from one another. The program consists of two phases: the first half is facilitated by the SOC team, while the second half is entirely participant-led, empowering the cohort to shape their own learning experience.

We invite applications from individuals and groups, regardless of their professional backgrounds. Past participants have demonstrated curiosity in sharing knowledge and a commitment to contributing to the common good. Their ongoing research is published on our website and displayed publicly, with all content freely accessible.

DEFINE

Define the words that need to be kept, even though they are not A2. In this case, the verb to lead, used in 'participant-led', is hard to replace, but is simpler if it is changed to 'self-led'.

peer - people who are on the same level as each other.

peer learning program - about being a teacher and a student at the same time.

cohort - a group of peers

participant-led = self-led - To lead is to decide what a group has to do. When the program is self-led, that means that the cohort decides on its own.

ARRANGE

Start with the simplest/clearest information. Break up the information into one sentence per new piece of information. Order it from simplest to most complex. In this example, this text is on the same page as a lot of projects you can look at - so mentioning the rest of the page is still a good place to end.

The School of Commons (SOC) has a 10-month peer learning program. Each year, 16 participants get chosen to be a part of this program. The participants of the program can be individual people or collectives.

The participants of the program each bring a project to work on.

The program is partly led by the SOC team, and partly self-led by the members of the cohort.

Peers are people who are on the same level as each other. A peer-learning program is about being a teacher and a student at the same time. A cohort is a group of peers.

To lead is to decide what a group has to do. So sometimes, the SOC team leads the program, and when it is self-led, that means that the cohort decides on its own.

Here you can see all the projects that have been part of the peer-learning program, as well as the projects from this year's cohort.

EXAMPLE 3 – FROM THE SCHOOL OF COMMONS "ISSUES" PAGE

https://schoolofcommons.org/making-public/issues

ISSUES is an annual, peer-led digital publication which serves as the milestone collective public offering for each School of Commons (SOC) program cycle.

ISSUES collates and contextualises the processes, practices and methodologies of each participating project within SOC. Each participating project is invited to contribute to ISSUES in a form and style that is both reflective of, and complementary to their own ways and workings. As such, experimentation and the re-working of traditional publishing modes are encouraged.

For each edition of ISSUES, the SOC cohort collaboratively develops a collective framing bringing together the thematic threads and working methods they have both individually and collectively explored and developed during their 10-month peer-learning journey.

Each edition of ISSUES is coupled with an editorial developed by the SOC team in collaboration with the cohort which adds further layers of contextualisation to the programme and outputs of each SOC offering.

REMOVE

Mark all the words that need to be removed because they are not A2 words, or because they are part of phrases that are not A2 phrases. Notice at this stage how much you have to remove, and remember that sometimes it is actually a good idea to sacrifice some information.

It should be easy for the reader to understand, and that also means that the information should be short and on topic.

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Each edition of ISSUES is coupled with an editorial developed by the SOC team in collaboration with the cohort which adds further layers of contextualisation to the programme and outputs of each SOC offering.

KEEP

Mark all specific words that need to be kept. Mark which information you want to keep, even though you will write it in different (easier) words.

ISSUES is an annual, peer-led digital publication which serves as the milestone collective public offering for each School of Commons (SOC) program cycle.

ISSUES collates and contextualises the processes, practices and methodologies of each participating project within SOC. Each participating project is invited to contribute to ISSUES in a form and style that is both reflective of, and complementary to their own ways and workings. As such, experimentation and the re-working of traditional publishing modes are encouraged.

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Each edition of ISSUES is coupled with an editorial developed by the SOC team in collaboration with the cohort which adds further layers of contextualisation to the programme and outputs of each SOC offering.

DEFINE

Define the words that need to be kept, even though they are not A2.In this example, some words are already explained in another text, so it is possible to refer to it, instead of defining them again.

publication - something that is published - which is to make content available to the public. It can be for example a book, an article, or a video.

cohort - see Example 2 (program).

peer-led - see Example 2 (program).

ARRANGE

Start with the simplest/clearest information. Break up the information into one sentence per new piece of information. Order it from simplest to most complex.

In this example, the important information that needed to be kept, but written in different words, is not made explicit in the A2 version. The simplified definition of a publication is so simple that it doesn't define if the publication is traditional or experimental.

It's important to remember that A2 is a vehicle of commoning and not a nuanced translation. It's like going from HD to lo-fi; you will lose a lot of details but it is important that the basic information you end up with still aligns with the HD version.

ISSUES is a digital publication that comes out each year, made by each cohort of the School of Commons (SOC) 10-month peer learning program*. Each project in a cohort can add something to ISSUES. ISSUES always has a theme that connects to all the projects.

A publication is something that is published - which is to make content available to the public. It can be for example a book, an article, or a video.

*See "program" for more information.

EXQUISITE COMMONS

Glacier Rapport

AWOL

Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange

Hitching a Ride to Enough English

Radio-Dreaming into the Electromagnetic Commons

Shortwave Collective

Colour, an inclusive visual language for climate communication

Yue Wu, Liliana Scapucci, Nina Buchmann

Jere Ikongio

Likon'yor - knowledge production through the unseen

Nora Sobbe

Mentoring as Practice

ARCHIIIVE

(d)estructura

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Broudou School

ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

LIKON'YOR

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION THROUGH THE UNSEEN

by Jere Ikongio

Jere Ikongio is a Lagos/Berlin-based artist whose work combines new media, performance, and immersive art to examine infrastructure, identity, and marginalized histories. Jere's work explores themes around the socio-political landscapes of cities, notably Lagos and Berlin, through interdisciplinary installations that recontextualize public and personal archives. This practice weaves together participatory performances, photography, XR, animation, and communal archiving to create layered, interactive narratives that highlight informal resilience and individual stories within communities. Using interactivity, exploration of space, hyper-identity, and memory making, Jere is invested in artworks that blur the line between physical and digital, the past, present, and future, creating a non-linear blend that presents a critical exploration of existing archives and a reimagination of public spaces (physical and digital).

Jere has exhibited globally and is a Magnum Foundation Fellow, a Digital Earth Fellow as well as a World Press Photo grantee and has been selected for the Lagos-Berlin Artist/Curator residency 2021, the Dekoloniale Berlin Residency 2023 as well as 2025 Artist and Scientist in Residence at Ligetizentrum Hamburg. Jere's work has been shown at the Uferstudios by Tanzfabrik Berlin, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, 5th Odessa Biennale of Contemporary Art, International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), Durban, the 11th Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Savvy contemporary, Berlin, Hong-Gah Museum, Taiwan, ZKU Berlin, 2nd Lagos Biennale and Museum Rietberg, Zurich amongst others. Jere is a member of the curatorial collective Tantdile Xperimenta Lab with work that advocates for intersectional visibility, challenging conventional histories through community-driven storytelling and immersive experiences.

GLOSSARY TERM "Ephemeral memorials"

Temporarilities and/or ritual spaces that honor loss through mutable elements. Unlike permanent monuments, ephemeral memorials embrace impermanence and change so that memory remains a living process. They function as transitional, communal gestures that allow grief and remembrance to evolve dynamically exploring the unseen, the hidden, the secretive - (like nsibidi), the spoken.

GLOSSARY TERM "Peer to peer (p2p)"

A decentralized exchange model, participants share information or resources directly with one another, without centralized control, digital transfer of knowledge between devices and digital messengers. In a P2P knowledge commons, information is treated as a public good (nonrival and widely accessible).

GLOSSARY TERM "Oral Historicity"

Framing of history through spoken narratives, storytelling, song and performance valuing alternative and indigenous ways of knowing accepting myths, rituals and oral testimonies as legitimate historical records. In oral historicity, the past is preserved in the words and memories.

TANTDILE

Tantdile is a digital and interdisciplinary artist collective based in Ibadan, Nigeria, working at the intersection of art, social inquiry, and public engagement. The collective develops socially and politically situated projects that foreground participation, collaboration, and immersive encounter as core artistic strategies. Tantdile functions as a generative platform for emerging and experimental artists, supporting the development of both individual and collective practices from research and conception through to realization and public presentation.

The collective brings together practitioners working across performance, new media, sound, installation, and participatory art. Operating through an interdisciplinary framework, Tantdile curates artistic processes and public-facing sessions that interrogate the contemporary human condition, examining how socio-political structures, policies, and systems of life shape lived experience.

Through immersive and site-responsive works, performances and live interventions, workshops and discursive formats, and pop-up/temporary art encounters Tantdile produces contexts in which art becomes a shared space of reflection and exchange, progressively integrating diverse publics as active agents within the work.

Tantdile is grounded in a belief that artistic growth is strengthened through collective thinking, critical dialogue, and peer-based evaluation. By cultivating a space where ideas and perspectives are continuously negotiated, the collective supports artistic practices that are shaped not only by individual authorship but through relational and communal processes.

LIKON'YOR

Central to Tantdile's curatorial approach is a reconfiguration of the public's role within artistic production. Rather than positioning audiences as passive recipients, the collective foregrounds participation and co-creation, allowing publics to emerge as collaborators within the work itself. This shift informs both the conceptual frameworks and formal structures through which Tantdile operates. In doing so, Tantdile advances a practice that views art as a living, social process - one that expands worldviews, fosters collective agency, and reflects the complexity of contemporary life.

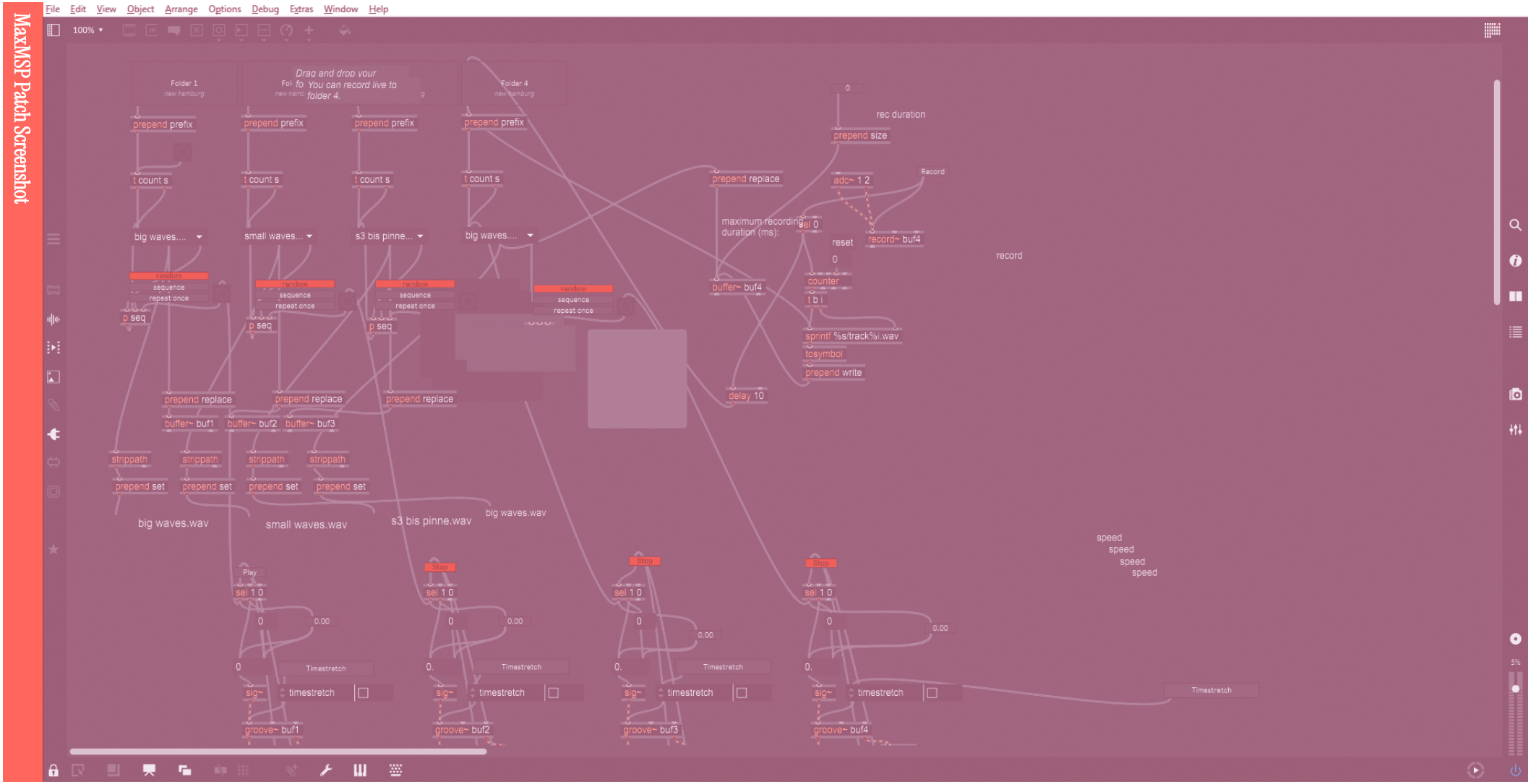
A sonic intervention grounded in decolonial theory and African-centered and Indigenous epistemologies, Likon'yor explores ephemeral memorials and living archives as counter-sites of knowledge production. Drawing from the work of thinkers such as Achille Mbembe and the collective praxis of Chimurenga, the project interrogates colonial temporalities and epistemic hierarchies by transforming the oral, the transient, and the unseen into a shared, audible commons.

By privileging oral tradition, Likon'yor enacts an African Indigenous hermeneutics: story and sound are treated as ontological acts rather than supplements to written history. Inspired by Chimurenga's commitment to collective memory, heritage here is understood as unfinished and continually re-authored. As Tricia Rose observes, hip-hop sampling operates as "a means of archival research, a process of musical and cultural archaeology" (Rose, 1994), a logic that informs the project's sonic methodology.

Adam Haupt reminds us that decolonisation requires a process of "de-Hollywoodising," noting that throughout the twentieth century, widely shared images and symbols were filtered through concentrated cultural industries (Haupt, 2012, p.38; Benkler). Likon'yor responds by appropriating, rather than rejecting, technological infrastructures "capturing globalisation" and repurposing imperial strategies for decolonial ends (Haupt, 2012, p.40).

Within this framework, information "wants to be free" (Thomas, 2002; Haupt, 2012), circulating as an immaterial, electronic style; ephemeral, communal, and resistant to ownership. In contrast to colonial mass production, Likon'yor insists on singular, shared experiences that refuse fixed labels, enabling communal meaning-making beyond dominant regimes of classification (Hebdige, 1979).

MaxMSP Patch Screenshot



LIKON'YOR I

Two bodies, two head faces hidden

inside woven baskets. present, yet unreadable.

baskets carry more than heads; they carry memories

cloth drapes like language inherited down without writings

The public bench becomes an altar, and waiting becomes a form of knowledge.

LIKON'YOR II

Standing still. Fleeting moves.

Static bodies, moving city, refusing urgency,

anchored to an alternate rhythm.

Resistance through pause,

Time isn't linear. It alternates and oscillates.

Likon'yor I

Likon'yor II

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MENTORING AS PRACTICE

by Nora Sobbe

Nora reacts to specific social situations through object-design processes that invite explorations of social interactions, which may initially feel familiar.

Object Concept: Nora Sobbe
Object Realization: Johannes Reck + Marcel Rickli
Object Photos: Marcel Rickli

GLOSSARY TERM "Sedimentation"

When you don't quite inhabit the norms, or you aim to transform them, you notice them as you come up against them. The wall is what we come up against: the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present, a barrier to change as well as to the mobility of some, a barrier that remains invisible to those who can flow into the spaces created by institutions.

(Cf. Ahmed, Sara (2012). On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 25, 199, 175)

The project *Mentoring as Practice* introduces a note-spitting machine that spits out small pieces of paper with short text inputs to people currently engaged as mentees or mentors, as well as to those interested in starting a mentoring relationship. Mentoring is a vessel for learning/teaching, which is often part of everyday study at art universities. Students are accompanied by a mentor in developing their projects, with the mentor responding to the topics or projects the mentee brings to each session. The exact way of working is usually left to the individuals involved, making mentoring a format that raises the question of how and in what constellations we want to learn together.

As a mentee during my three years in the *Transdisciplinary Studies* program at Zurich University of the Arts, I often was not fully aware that with each mentoring session, I was simultaneously part of shaping how mentoring could unfold. Instead, I found myself questioning certain interactions in terms of how well they aligned with my preconceived notions of what mentoring is meant to be. For example, after being asked, "How are you?" by mentors, I wondered whether I should return this frequently asked question. Would doing so perhaps undermine a directedness of the conversation that is meant to be maintained? Which doubts about my artistic practice did I want to bring into mentoring, and which would I rather leave out? What kinds of exchanges would a mentor be willing to engage in? Could it also involve, among other things, discussing the compatibility of artistic practice and earning a sufficient basic income?

In reflecting on the expectations at play in mentoring and on the functions this format can assume, I did not want to solely draw from my own experience. Instead, I wanted to include additional perspectives on, and experiences with, mentoring or mentoring-like relational forms.

To do so, I turned to three further contexts in which mentoring or mentoring-like practices are discussed and enacted. From these, I worked out similarities-in-difference and, by doing so, generated three motifs that guided my reflection on my own mentoring experiences: *#Give-and-Take, #Authority/Measuring, and #Transformation.*

As a first context, I looked at the mentoring program *Berufsziel: Professorin an einer Kunsthochschule*. The program was initiated in 2002 by Sigrid Haase (then Commissioner for Women's and Gender Equality at the Berlin University of the Arts) and still runs today under the name Prof*me. Here mentoring is used as a personnel development tool in the field of gender equality. Prof*me is aimed at FLINTA*[1] on their path toward a professorship. For one year, the mentees stay in contact with a professor from one of Berlin's art universities whom they choose as their mentor[2]. The first five cycles of the program were extensively evaluated, and this evaluation was published[3]. Across these reports, mentoring is repeatedly described as a #Give-and-Take between mentee and mentor: mentees could expand their networks, while mentors received impulses for their work from so-called junior academics[4]. This #Give-and-Take is also discussed in terms of institutional benefit. Joint projects between mentees and mentors are thought to ultimately benefit students through improved teaching quality[5]. Building bridges between artistic work inside and outside the university is presented as something desirable, and mentoring relationships are seen as helping to make this possible[6]. At the same time, mentoring is presented as a format that offers opportunities for exchanging ideas "abseits von institutionellen Zwängen [outside of institutional constraints, N.S.]", including reflections on "mit welcher Haltung [...] man den Hochschulen begegnen will [the attitude one wants to take in engaging with universities, N.S.]".[7]

As a second context, I turned to the project The Hologram, which, based on experiences with the U.S. healthcare system, opposes the economisation of healthcare and proposes alternative care constellations alongside professional healthcare.

> **At its most basic level three care-givers attend to the wellbeing of one person. Each care-giver represents a different quality of concern. They're not experts or authorities [#Authority/Measuring], but people willing to lend attention and to do co-research, to be a scribe or a living record for the person in the center, who we call "the hologram."**[8]

---

1 FLINTA* is a German acronym meaning Frauen (women), Lesben (lesbians), inter Personen (intersex people), nichtbinäre Personen (non-binary people), trans Personen (trans people), and agender Personen (agender people). The asterisk (*) indicates inclusion of additional gender identities.

2 Nigbolu, Seda, and Sigrid Haase (2011). "Frauen auf dem Weg nach oben – Mentoring: Das UdK Berlin-Programm," in Musen Mythen Mentoring, ed. Sigrid Haase. Berlin: Universität der Künste Berlin, 216–217, here 216.

3 Haase, Sigrid (ed.) (2011). Musen Mythen Mentoring. Berlin: Universität der Künste Berlin, XII.

4 Rennert, Martin (2011). "Grußwort," in Musen Mythen Mentoring, ed. Sigrid Haase. Berlin: Universität der Künste Berlin, 9.

5 Haase, Sigrid, and Stefanie Woit (2011). "‚Nach dem Kongress war mir klar: Ich initiiere ein Mentoring-Programm' – Ein Gespräch mit Sigrid Haase," in Musen Mythen Mentoring, ed. Sigrid Haase. Berlin: Universität der Künste Berlin, 13–19, here 16.

6 Haase, Sigrid, and Stefanie Woit (2011). "‚Nach dem Kongress war mir klar: Ich initiiere ein Mentoring-Programm' – Ein Gespräch mit Sigrid Haase," in Musen Mythen Mentoring, ed. Sigrid Haase. Berlin: Universität der Künste Berlin, 13–19, here 15.

7 Berger, Renate (2011). "Wer war Mentor?" in Musen Mythen Mentoring, ed. Sigrid Haase. Berlin: Universität der Künste Berlin, 32–34, here 33.

8 Garrett, Marc, and Cassie Thornton (2020). "Art, Debt, Health and Care: An Interview," in The Hologram: Feminist, Peer-to-Peer Health for a Post-Pandemic Future, by Cassie Thornton. London: Pluto Press, 82–94, here 89.

The project was initiated in 2016 by artist/activist Cassie Thornton, with considerations on the project published in 2020 in *The Hologram: Feminist, Peer-to-Peer Health for a Post-Pandemic Future* [9]. I see parallels to mentoring in the directness of the conversations that take place within these care constellations: a "triangle" of three caregivers tends to the health of a fourth person: the "hologram." The "Hologram" constellations are presented as a peer-to-peer protocol, with the function of the "triangle" explicitly characterised by a distancing from *#Authority* and from being experts. The project advocates for a "networked reciprocation" *(#Give-and-Take)*. Each "hologram" simultaneously becomes part of another person's "triangle", although that person should not be a member of the "hologram's" own "triangle" [10].

As a third context, I examined reflections from Italian difference feminism of the 1980s, which addressed a relational form among women* in which one woman* entrusts herself to another woman* who embodies "more" for her. These *affidamento* relationships are conceived as relationships initiated through an act of #Authority attribution. Unlike in the project *The Hologram*, there is no turning away from #Authority here. Instead, in intentionally established relationships of *#Authority* among women*, the opportunity for women*'s participation in society is seen – one in which they do not orient themselves toward mediating instances of patriarchal structures.

> ***Nicht die Härte der Unterdrückung erklärt das Fehlen weiblicher Freiheit, sondern der Mangel an Autorität, an symbolischer Zuweisung von Autorität. Diese kann eine Frau nur von einer Frau bekommen, denn nur eine Frau legitimiert sie in ihrer Differenz. Und sie bekommt sie nur, wenn sie an sich einen weiblichen Beurteilungsmaßstab [#Authority/Measuring] anlegen läßt. Letzteres ist, das wissen wir, der entscheidende und schwierige Schritt zur weiblichen Freiheit. Von ihm hängt es ab, ob die weibliche Differenz lebendig aus ihrem historisch bedingten Gefangensein herauskommt, aus dem Inneren eines Inneren, denn sie ist doppelt gefangen: in der sozialen Ordnung, die sie in einer unsagbaren Erfahrung festhält, und in der Erfahrung der einzelnen, die nicht weiß, wie sie herauskommen kann, ohne ihr Geschlecht zu verleugnen.*** [11]
>
> **It is not the severity of their oppression that explains the failure of female freedom, but the lack of authority, of symbolic authorization – that authorization which a woman can receive only from female source because it is the only one which legitimates her in her difference. And which she receives only if she agrees to submit to a female measure of judgement [#Authority/#Measuring]. The latter, as we know, is the decisive, difficult step of female freedom, which determines whether female difference will issue alive from its historical imprisonment, inside and interior, twice inside: inside the social order which keeps her locked in an unspeakable experience, inside the experience of the individual woman who does not know how to get out of it without denying her sex.** [12]

The difference is that feminists developed their specific understanding of *#Authority* starting from the mother-daughter relationship and defining it in contrast to hierarchy and power.

Interestingly, each of the three examined contexts frames mentoring or mentoring-like relationships under an overarching purpose or as the starting point of socially transformative processes *(#Transformation)*. While the project The Hologram is presented as a "social technology for dehabituating humans from capitalism [13]," Italian difference feminism seeks to grant women* a social existence without requiring adaptation to patriarchal structures. The mentoring program Berufsziel: Professorin an einer Kunsthochschule promises improved teaching quality by connecting artistic practices inside and outside the university and at the same time frames mentoring relationships as spaces outside the university for reflecting on university structures.

I began reflecting on my own mentoring experience within an arts university context under the motif of *#Transformation* and started to see the openly and loosely defined framework of this format as something transformative: it raises the question of how, and in which constellations, we want to learn together. Engaging in this negotiation process through the mentoring format for me means participating in a transformative process of enacting and shaping mentoring as practice.

As a mentee in the study program *Transdisciplinary Studies of the Arts*, the imperative of shaping learning practices within the mentoring framework became evident in the fact that students could choose their mentors themselves, even beyond the university context, as the study program offers a remuneration to involve people from the outside. This made it possible to integrate people and contexts into the learning environment that were not anchored within the university and might not be institutionally recognised as learning contexts. The transdisciplinary setting also required that expertise and #Authority between teaching mentors and student mentees would not be attributed solely on the basis of the academic hierarchy of student/teacher. Instead, such attributions had to be explored in relation to specific projects and topics, since many of the projects did not take place within a discipline shared by both. In everyday study contexts, the question "How do we want to learn together?" that mentoring implies may not always be present when

[9] Thornton, Cassie (2020). The Hologram: Feminist, Peer-to-Peer Health for a Post-Pandemic Future. London: Pluto Press.

[10] Thornton, Cassie (2020). The Hologram: Feminist, Peer-to-Peer Health for a Post-Pandemic Future. London: Pluto Press, 54.

[11] Libreria delle donne di Milano (1988). Wie weibliche Freiheit entsteht. Eine neue politische Praxis. 1st ed. Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 173 f.

[12] The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective (1990). Sexual Difference. A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 143.

[13] Thornton, Cassie (2020). The Hologram: Feminist, Peer-to-Peer Health for a Post-Pandemic Future. London: Pluto Press, 13.

entering a mentoring session. The extent to which space opens up for negotiating preconceptions of mentoring, or the needs and wishes that mentees and mentors bring to this encounter might also vary between different study programs (intradisciplinary, transdisciplinary, etc.) and can look different depending on who is involved as mentee or mentor. As Sara Ahmed shows:

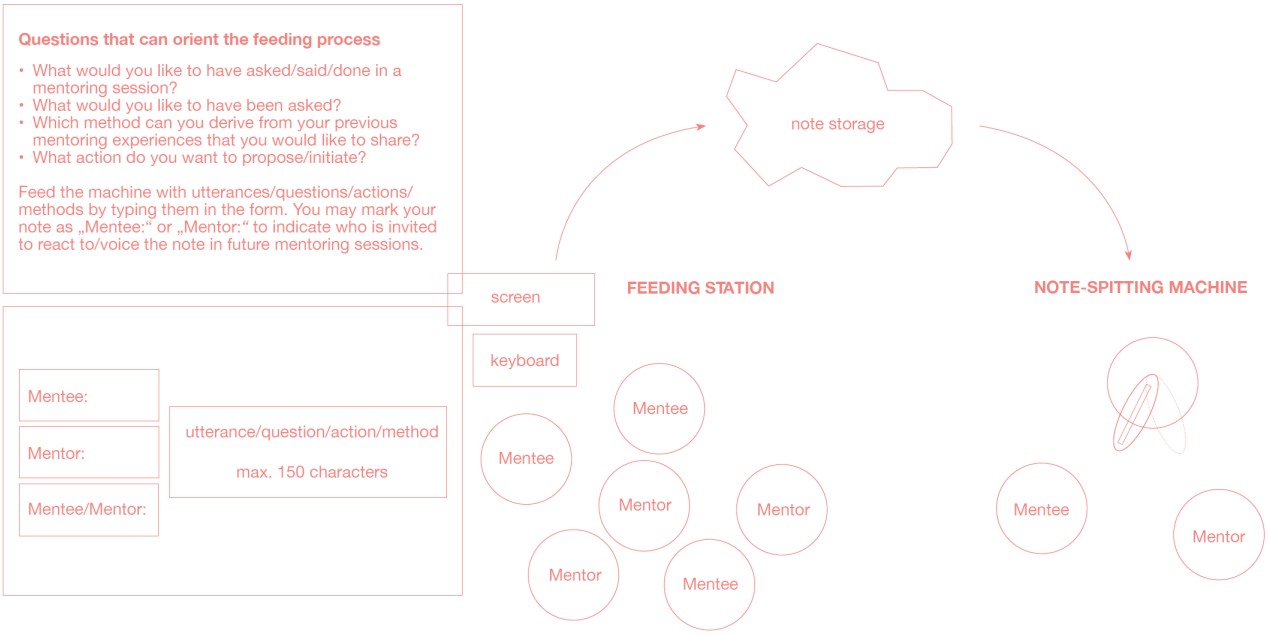
> **When you don't quite inhabit the norms, or you aim to transform them, you notice them as you come up against them. The wall is what we come up against: the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present, a barrier to change as well as to the mobility of some, a barrier that remains invisible to those who can flow into the spaces created by institutions [14].**

I have developed an object that is meant, on the one hand, to serve as a reminder of the space for shaping, and, on the other, to prompt mentee and mentor – should this space not open up – to enter into a negotiation process around their preconceptions of mentoring and needs/wishes for this learning format.

The object initiates an exchange between various mentee/mentor constellations by circulating statements, questions, gestures, and methods that invite response from both sides. Mentees and mentors can themselves enrich this pool of possibilities by feeding the system with questions, statements, gestures, or methods that they have found helpful in mentoring sessions or that they would like to integrate into future ones. The note-spitting object accompanies mentoring sessions and invites mentee and mentor to sharpen and discuss their respective preconceptions of mentoring in relation to – or in contrast with – the slips of paper produced by the mechanism. The object materialises an implicit recourse to prior understandings of mentoring – an appropriation of statements, questions, gestures, and methods associated with it – while at the same time inviting the extension of this shared pool. Ultimately, the project Mentoring as Practice asks whether a punctual formalisation of mentoring sessions can help hold the openness of this learning format and invite mentees and mentors to shape and enact mentoring as a practice.

1) note-spitting machine | photo: ©Marcel Rickli

[14] Ahmed, Sara (2012). On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 25, 199, 175. Cf. also Saner, Philippe, Sophie Vögele, and Pauline Vessely (2016). Schlussbericht. Art.School. Differences. Edited by the Institute for Art Education, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste. Zürich. Accessible at: https://blog.zhdk.ch/artschooldifferences/files/2016/10/ASD_Schlussbericht_final_web_verlinkt.pdf (accessed December 6, 2025). The final report of the A.S.D. research project points out "*institutionell verankerte Normativitäten, die über die Auswahlverfahren hinaus wirken und potentiell diskriminierende Effekte bergen: Neben einer Herkunft aus den privilegierten sozialen Klassen und einer adäquaten Vorbildung werden in erster Linie weisse, junge, nichtbehinderte, gesunde und psychisch unbelastete Körper bevorzugt* [institutionally anchored norms that extend beyond the selection process and have potentially discriminatory effects: in addition to coming from privileged social classes and having adequate prior education, preference is given primarily to white, young, non-disabled, healthy, and mentally unburdened individuals, N.S.].," 411.


Questions that can orient the feeding process
• What would you like to have asked/said/done in a mentoring session?
• What would you like to have been asked?
• Which method can you derive from your previous mentoring experiences that you would like to share?
• What action do you want to propose/initiate?
Feed the machine with utterances/questions/actions/methods by typing them in the form. You may mark your note as „Mentee:“ or „Mentor:“ to indicate who is invited to react to/voice the note in future mentoring sessions.
Mentee:
Mentor:
Mentee/Mentor:
utterance/question/action/method
max. 150 characters
note storage
screen
keyboard
FEEDING STATION
NOTE-SPITTING MACHINE
Mentee
Mentee
Mentor
Mentor
Mentor
Mentee
Mentee
Mentor

2) sketch of how the feeding station and the note-spitting machine work together

The object – a note-spitting machine – is positioned during mentoring sessions between mentee (A) and mentor (B) and spits out notes at defined time intervals (within a random range) in the direction of A/B. The notes contain utterances/questions/gestures/methods. A or B is invited to read the note aloud to their counterpart in several ways: as an offer for interaction; by distancing themselves from it and thereby updating the mentoring setting as it exists or modifying it in contrast to the slip of paper; and so on. A feeding station is crucial for the setting, where the pool of statements and questions from which the object randomly selects is generated. Mentees and mentors are invited to type on a keyboard utterances/questions they would have liked to say/ask in a mentoring session to note actions waiting to be realised within a mentoring session (“I actually wish I had recorded the conversation.”) or to note actions/gestures that could become a method (“I brought strawberries from my neighbor’s garden, just take some!”). The notes are digitally saved and can be assigned to either A or B, or they are saved under the category “A/B”: here the object randomly decides whether the statement/question will be spat in the direction of A or B during upcoming mentoring sessions. The note-spitting machine draws on the digital storage that is generated by mentees and mentors at the feeding station.

Mentee: Actually I would have loved to record this conversation.
Mentor: When is a good moment to receive feedback?
Mentee: I really would like to be a scholar but I don't know what that means.
Mentor: What is another project or interest you have (for more perspective)?

3) small pieces of paper with short text inputs that were spat out by the note-spitting machine.
photo: ©Marcel Rickli

4) close-up of the note-spitting machine.
photo: ©Marcel Rickli

WORKSHOP WITH SOC

During the SoC Gathering from July 4–6, I collected slips of paper with the peers of the 25/26 cohort for the note-spitting-machine. It was one of the first opportunities to generate notes for the spitting mechanism. In a roughly 50-minute workshop, we simulated mentoring sessions in which the note-spitting object was involved in an adapted form.

I asked the workshop participants to form groups of three. Each group member briefly introduced a topic or project they were currently working on and would like to explore further through discussion. In the next step, each group selected one of these topics or projects. The person who had proposed the chosen topic became the mentee, while the other two negotiated who would take on the role of note-taker during the conversation and who would act as the mentor. For approximately 30 minutes, participants were then invited to discuss the mentee's topic, or, in the case of the note-taker, to document the conversation. The mentee could express in advance any preferences regarding what the notes should focus on.

To involve the note-spitting-machine in this setting with several mentoring sessions of three-person groups, it was necessary to adapt the way the object functioned, since it existed and currently exists only in a single version and cannot participate in multiple mentoring sessions simultaneously. I therefore positioned myself next to the spit mechanism, and every time the mechanism would have stuck out its tongue and spat out a slip, I projected a note labeled "Mentee:" / "Mentor." Additionally, a small auditory signal was needed to draw the mentee's and mentor's attention to the "spat-out" slip. The mentee and mentor could then decide whether to integrate the statement/question/method/gesture written on the slip into their conversation or to distance themselves from it.

At the end of the workshop, the groups were asked to use the final ten minutes to write down statements, questions, methods, or gestures that could inform future mentoring sessions.

5) notes collected during the SoC Gathering in Zurich, July 4–6, 2025

Transcription

- *Mentor: How does it show up/display in your context/culture?*
- *Mentee/Mentor: Why is it not possible?*
- *Mentee: How to work collectively? How to equally share responsibility in collective work?*
- *Mentor: What are the challenges the Mentee faces from their own experience? Situated Knowledge*
- *Mentor: Is a leader important? Is it leading or is it care work?*
- *Mentor: How did you first come up with the idea?*
- *Mentee: What made you ask this question?*
- *Mentor: Was what I just said helpful?*
- *Mentor: Turn back to yourself!*
- *Mentor: Let's bring ChatGPT into conversation.*
- *Mentee: You could form a silly research/mutual aid group.*
- *Mentee/Mentor: How do you practice what you teach?*
- *Mentor: How can we be more silly + playful together?*
- *Mentee/Mentor: Both share personal experiences about the subject!*
- *Mentee/Mentor: Can you think about a starting point/initial state or instructions to start the book/practice?*
- *Mentee/Mentor: When is it a good moment to receive feedback?*
- *Mentee/Mentor: To use DAS Theatre methods when a Mentor (What kind of feedback would you like).*
- *Mentor: What is another project/interest you have (for more perspective)?*

EXQUISITE COMMONS

Glacier Rapport

AWOL

Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange

Hitching a Ride to Enough English

Radio-Dreaming into the Electromagnetic Commons

Shortwave Collective

Colour, an inclusive visual language for climate communication

Yue Wu, Liliana Scapucci, Nina Buchmann

Jere Ikongio

Likon'yor - knowledge production through the unseen

Nora Sobbe

Mentoring as Practice

ARCHIIIVE

(d)estructura

Common (d)estrucuras

Caro Bodensteiner

Notes on Practicing Family

School of Commons 2025

Colored Image Plates

Seeds for Survival at the Edge of the Desert

LIOS Labs

School of Commons 2025

Exquisite Commons

Sala de Tē

Tensile Paradise Field Manual

Ula Liagaitė

Sitting on a Chair

CHIMERA

A Somatic Practice of Multiplicity

Broudou School

ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

NOTES ON PRACTICING FAMILY

by Caro Bodensteiner

Caro Bodensteiner

Research-based theatre and multi-media arts.

In their work caro looks at social and political conditions under which we live, work, practice, act and become to be "someone". They are interested in how things are being normalized as part of *Western civilization history* or *global capitalism* or *German democratic history*, looking at how forms of violence materialize and are represented in architectures and aesthetics of the city as well as in institutions and structures of the nation state through which they form our bodies and minds.

GLOSSARY TERM "Family"*

Chosen family I believe is a regenerative community of growth and support
memory bank –
estranged
Because a chosen family emerges from how we move through the work
involves blood, contracts, and a shared history
The pain that we carry with chosen family is shared differently. It is less "for granted" and the relation is more as a practice.
A place you long to turn to even as you pull away from it.
Seeing one's existence. Accept one's being.
Sometimes an all-consuming after thought in practice.
A structure in which there is an agreement
Family is a space where feeling sad doesn't feel uncomfortable.
Family means we are all connected (in a weird way) and we are responsible of what happens collectively.
Family sits between love and accountability.
>creating a space for - Sadness & Grief - Conflict Resolution - Healing & Dialogue
I CALL THEM BECAUSE I SHOULD.
ANOTHER FAMILY, LIKE SIBLINGS OR WIVES
We should practice 'family' with all the love care and solidarity beyond it's borders.
that my friends could be family to me
THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRYING TO START THEIR DAY WITHOUT YOU BUT WILL BE READY TO WELCOME YOU ANY TIME YOU ARE READY TO JOIN
we are all interconnected
"I am because you are" (Indonesian saying / understanding of Peace)
family is non-consensual permanent attachments with random locals.
It's the one thing no one chose.
Family is a process of becoming together w/ fellow humans, non-humans, & the planet
Family is who you would run to and share.
New kinships that allow us to break familiar patterns. New images that allow us to imagine unfamiliar settings.
FAMILIA ES LA MANADA
Family – chosen, built Your base, your home, your safe heaven.
kind of meaningless but also really important

**this is a collection of words noted down by the cohort members present and generously shared with me in zurich in july, put together by me in random order (caro bodensteiner)*

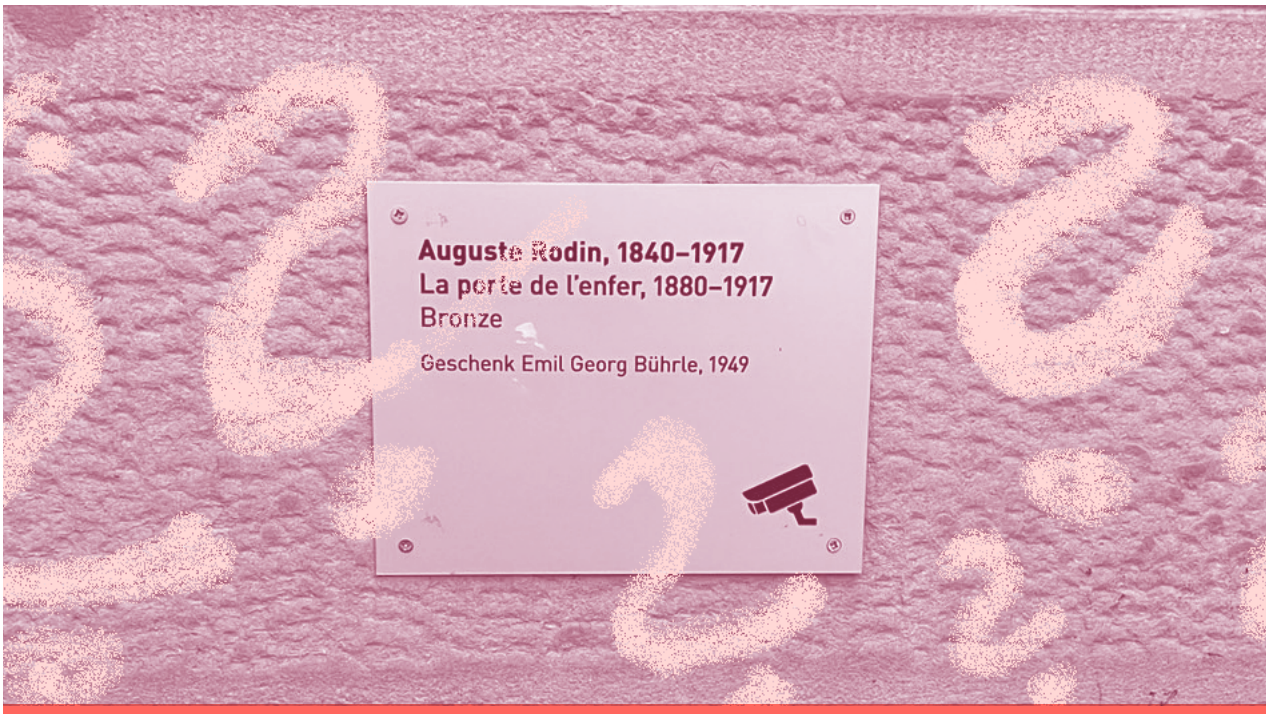
Side quests*:

- find a closed door and knock very loud
- tell a story about it
- find out about the cleaning of a place you regularly attend

**These are things I did that led me to thinking about the following. I invite everyone to go on some side quests.*

THE WHITE MAN PUTTING THE PAST TO REST / GERMAN FAMILY / WHAT SHOULD NOT BE SPOKEN ABOUT

I stand in front of Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland's biggest museum for arts. Beside the main entrance stands a closed door with naked bodies from its bottom to its top. At the bottom there are more female read bodies, the higher it goes I see more males. I am looking at a bronze sculpture almost 7 meters high with a blackish patina:



The Gates of Hell, Auguste Rodin, bronze, gift by Emil G Bührle

I know that the sculpture's version standing here right in front of me is the 4th[1] bronze cast. I know that this cast was once ordered by the German Nazi-Regime selected to become the entrance of the never realized so called "Führermuseum", Hitler wanted to create about himself in Linz/Austria. They ordered the Gates of Hell at a Parisian foundry and paid for it. It wasn't finished before Nazi-Germany was defeated in 1945 and came to Zurich later with a sales exhibition, where it was bought by Emil Bührle. The richhhhhh weapons manufacturer who made his money by selling *neutral* weapons to all WW2 parties, including Germany, gifted the sculpture as a present to Kunsthaus. On the information board next to the artwork standing outside in public in the city centre, we can read that this was a gift by Bührle in 1949. I wonder why they do not inform about the fact that this sculpture is standing here as a result of historical circumstances including Hitler's art taste and the involvement of Nazi-money (two times). I wonder and I feel angry about it. I thought great European democracy's institutions like the museum are supposed to educate in an exhaustive and extensive way. I understood that nobody forgot to mention the missing facts. But there has been made a decision to only tell the convenient part of the sculpture's history that is the museum's history that is the city's history that is the country's history that is the neighbouring country's history that is the European history.

*I think of my father and how he wouldn't want to talk about the past when I was asking him about it. How he would tell me: "That's just how it was" without further explanations and I wonder if there could be a connection between him and the museum institution doing the gesture of *putting the past to rest*[2], because it is over now, you know?*

1 Most probably, there are ambiguities on which of the first 4 of 8 bronze versions in total stands where.

2 This is translated from a German expression "die Vergangenheit ruhen lassen" which basically describes a gesture that points the attention to the now or the future instead to keep oneself busy with what happened before furthermore.

---*Putting the past to rest* as a hand pushing aside something that has been and wants to make space for something that is now. The intention behind might be to create a space where there are no worries and loads from before, that is not charged with foregone burdens and hardships. Relatable – when one goes through something that costs them a lot, they might prefer to let it be and don't wish for their descendants to face a continuation or repetition of their suffering. Then there also is the promise of capitalism that progress means more comfort, improved comfort, better comfort

Putting the past to rest is closing a door turning towards a new space, free from inherited burdens and old debts, like finishing something or containing it---

My father very rarely shared anything from his past. I would ask him how things were back then, how he made decisions, why he left home, and he responded with an "Ah" that was more like an aching exhalation than an answer. His two brothers are pretty similar to that, they don't see any necessity to answer to a question that might bring them back to a place they left long time ago like their childhood.

---*Putting the past to rest* is a patriarchal and colonial move---

We know how European colonizers, among them Germans, went out into the world during the time of colonization to *explore* and to *discover* some *unknown, mysterious, wild, simple, foreign, uncivilized* cultures, peoples and lands. When they arrived on indigenous land without being invited, they did not behave like respectful and polite guests waiting to be offered. They just sat down at the table, took over, declared the table, the people and the land their property and installed a new order as if nothing was there before. Centuries of existing cultures and traditions were treated as not relevant to the project of European civilization, time and history were put on reset by the new foreign rulers of the violently conquered territories and people. As if the time at the colonies, the so called "New World", started only after the arrival of the colonizers. As if there was nothing before. In this way, European history was exported around the world to become global universal history. In this way, it was also possible to claim everything they found as theirs: all kinds of things like land, natural resources and commodities, cultures, riches, knowledge, animals and plants, humans.

Another line of the development of modern Europe, that is wealthy, democratic, civilised, peaceful, stable, is the arise of patriarchy in the context of the formation of capitalism. Women were excluded from common and public spaces and confined to the private and domestic sphere. Female sociality, friendship, knowledge and wisdom were delegitimized. Work and practices associated with women were devaluated. "Immoral" women and others who did not conform social and gendered norms were persecuted as witches. That way it was possible to concentrate all power in the hands of men, the subjects of Enlightenment and the new modern society.

Women and children, the family, became part of a man's property like land, house, stock, and other capitals. While before tasks like doing the laundry, cooking, taking care of children and elders, medical care of the sick, midwifery and birth assistance have often been shared amongst communities as collective practices, these collective spheres were destroyed and with them centuries of communal knowledge and practice systems in which women were carriers of wisdom and know-how. In favour of the new established science systems of Modernity, old traditions had to disappear. The past was pushed aside for the creation of a new time of free and independent (male white) individuals.

*My father was born 1946 in a Bavarian village of around 30 inhabitants. I speculate at this time no one talked about the past. After WW2 the whole Germany must have continued their denial of the genocides committed by the Nazi-regime with the German society being complicit. Silence must have been the order of the day back then, about what has been seen, witnessed, heard of, done, known during the past 12 years (and before). At least was that what I had repeatedly heard: Nobody talked about the discrimination, prosecution, detention and mass killing of Jews, Sinti*ze and Rom*nja, persons with disabilities, so called "asocial" persons, political and war prisoners, gays and queers.*

*It was the time Nuremberg Trials of the Major War Criminals were going on, where 24 Nazis were brought to justice, who invoked their own ignorance and lack of knowledge, denied or downplayed their responsibility, and justified their innocence. "Didn't know." "Only followed commands." "Cannot remember." How did *ordinary people* in Germany perceive this? Did they recognize themselves in the defendants? Did these men help them to outsource their own responsibility?*

---*Putting the past to rest[1]* - one could think this is part of democratic history of Western national states who established their values like freedom and liberty, equality and justice through violent exclusions and extractions only for some. And while their heroic stories of conquests do not work anymore since they made themselves the great peace makers, they found other ways to keep on justifying their hegemonic position in the capitalist competition of nation states---

1 I hope it is clear that in this text I am focusing on Germany as a Western democracy, without discussing other political systems or making comparisons with them.

In the post-WW2-Germanys the political intentions to denazify German society were put into practice only up to a certain point. GDR[2] declared itself an "antifascist" state and prosecuted former Nazis stricter than West-Germany, still they found their ways back into power positions. FRG[3] made a comeback easier for old Nazis, rather accepting their excuses and lies in court and making use of their *expertise and experience* for reconstructing the nation state, integrated into the "West". Former Nazis were represented in many cases and high positions in the FRG. While not talking too much about collective responsibility for the genocides and atrocities that have been going on, two "new" nation states have been built back up with Nazis in various positions of power, and the workforce and labour of many migrant workers whose children until today must prove they are *German* enough[4].

Throughout reunification in 1990, where the vibe of another new national era was reignited and the former GDR state system was taken over by West-Germany, the idea of the great German nation is being carried on until the point that nowadays the Federal Republik performs a culture of remembrance in which the uniqueness of the Holocaust is central to the self-conception as a moral, purified, *normal* society of democratic individuals, freed from the Nazis. This results in guilt pride as a sense of moral superiority as a nation and at the same time to an individualized responsibility everyone carries for themselves instead of understanding what collective accountability means. History is being told in a way that doesn't really tackle the image of oneself, but comforts, and helps to justify capitalist war politics, called "historical responsibility" and "Staatsräson".

2 German Democratic Republik (DDR) was administrated by and became part of Soviet Union.

3 Federal Republik of Germany (BRD) was administrated by the Western allies (USA, France, GB) became part of NATO.

4 Which shows not only the continuation of racism as systemic structure and incorporated in bodies and minds, but also a narrative in which the fact that Germany is an immigration society is not being told.

---I don't believe it is liberating to forget about how we came here. Because it doesn't really disappear. It's just veiled like the German Bundestag in Berlin 1995, wrapped in fabric like a gift---

What has been hard for my father affects me even though he tried to keep it away from me.

WASHING THE GUILT AWAY / WHITE CUBE / WHAT ONE COULD THINK OF WHEN STANDING AT THE GATES OF HELL

Coloniality continues today and reaches into Western democracies, where labour and social division are organized along race, class and gender. While Germany deals with its colonial past in a sketchy way, many migrant workers are doing the hardest and worst-paid jobs for this society without appropriate recognition and access to the *good life*. Their work contributes to German economy in ways similar to the forced labour of Nazi extermination and exploitation, the war as well as the extraction during German colonialism.

In the context of European Enlightenment liberation processes from a religiously justified feudalism system happened and shaped the idea of freedom as freedom from dependencies and domination to being an autonomous individual. In our high-tech neoliberal capitalist system once a certain standard of living has been achieved, individual freedom aims to free oneself from reproductive work such as cleaning, washing, cooking, and other forms of caregiving.

Freedom for Germans often includes a liberation from historic guilt. They don't want to have to take care of their past. They want to say, "Never again" and continue their future-oriented way of living, *finally in peace*. They want to live happily in denial, saying "We are not racist", while fascism is coming back to town and German families slowly forget about their Nazi heritage.

Cleaning the Gates of Hell

I can walk through Zurich and pass by the central train station. Switzerland is very proud of their punctual and well-ordered train system. Trains are expensive and clean, the extended office area of the well-paid employees commuting between the cities. The trains stand empty in Zurich terminus station and people in orange pass through them, collecting the waste, emptying the trash cans. They look tired and as if in a parallel world to all the travellers in transit.

I can walk through the city of Zurich and pass by the biggest art museum. They are very proud of their collection, giving a taste by positioning a huge bronze sculpture beside the main entrance for everyone to see. A person on a lifting platform stands close to the sculpture wiping it with a cloth. I learn that after leaving the sculpture outside for many years before where it was oxidizing and turning green, they changed their maintenance concept, reversed the oxidation process and applied some layer of wax on the material which preserves the patina the way the artist had intended it 100 years ago – keeping the Gates as if no time had passed since then.

The Western museum institution is working to collect, preserve, conserve, educate, make accessible. In white spaces it presents objects and art works often out of their contexts of origin, creation and history. It displays and proves, produces and reproduces legitimated knowledge and truths. Its basic architecture, the white cube, illustrates neutrality and objectivity, appears harm- and guiltless. The clean surface of the space neutralizes the rot of historical and present circumstances of violent extractions. What we should see is the present, now-now-now, timelessness.

Kunsthaus Zürich placed the Gates of Hell in front of their door to build a bridge to the dwellers of Zurich[1], to represent their collection, to represent European arts tradition, to represent Western Modernity. Only 2 years ago they decided to take care of the sculpture in a way that includes its contextualization: inside the enormous new building, funded by Bührle's weapons-money[2], they put a small sign telling about the Nazi-connections of their version. In this new building the cleaning staff is not hired by the museum anymore but outsourced to an external service provider. Even though they do the same thing, the conservator is being paid way more salary than the cleaners.

Here we move between engineered visibility and invisibility: What becomes apparent is the care work the museum does to maintain the status quo of art works, objects and royal entrances to exhibit a specific narration of their subject. This generates its reason to exist. What disappears in the white space is the daily cleaning work, happening in isolation before or after the public opening hours of the institution, keeping the sacred halls pleasant. It is the things and people that are excluded and not part of the exhibition world because they never visited a museum and aren't addressed as visitors or are not considered *art* or *history*. It is the talking about how the objects ended up in the museum, where the money comes from and goes to. It is the ongoing extractive functioning of the institution. It is the reproduction of systemic violence, disappearing behind symbolic and performative reparations that do not mean actual change. We see the whitewashed facades and walls of an architecture that is always clean, while the labour behind this neatness is kept invisible.

Like the museum, the family[3] is not only a place of knowledge production and transfer but also an institution of care. As the so called *nucleus* of (Western) society it is the place where human life is being reproduced – literally and also through daily practices of nurturing, feeding, washing. The capitalist privatization (and isolation) of care work finds its strong anchoring in the nuclear family, that holds heteronormativity and patriarchy in place and passes on social norms.

Family is often the place where we learn about ourselves and the world, where we come from and how we can sustain a living in the future. While it works in service of continuation and persistence of a lineage, possessions, knowledge and traditions, a family's narration of the past is often fragmented. The loss of parts of history can have many different reasons like collective or individual conditions of extinction, expulsion and displacement, colonization, migration, war, environmental catastrophes, persecution by authorities, hegemonic oppression, theft, oblivion, illness and so on. It can happen through selective remembrance aiming to cut off inconvenient legacies, through silence trying to avoid discomfort, deny guilt, and detach from responsibility.

1 Some employees told me in an interview.

2 See part before.

3 I refer to the nuclear, heteronormative family that is most widerspread and normalized in "Western" societies as basic social structure and unit.

I remember some defensive vibe my parents had when answering to my questions about my grandparent's lives in Nazi-Germany. I feel they just copied the stories from their parents saying one couldn't do anything else than being obedient to the fascist regime. Following this argument, for German families, too, the conformity to the state order became a question of survival. They could talk about the hardships of war, about captivity, about how their Jewish friends disappeared and how they couldn't do anything about it and thus tell their own stories of suffering.

---The move of *putting the past to rest* can be seen as a manner to keep up and reproduce the status quo of power relations, capitalism and nation states. The way Germany tells its own history, it remakes itself in a way that secures its stand throughout the course of time.

One hand pushing aside the past, the other one holding space following specific ideas of who belongs to the nation, who qualifies as a citizen, who deserves protection and care, who does the washing, who carries responsibility, who is part of the family and who is outside of it as a threat for the nation's safety, security and stability---

When I look at the falling bodies, in hell for their sins in life, I must think of drowning people, of the fortress Europe and folks dying at its closed doors, of the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean being mass graves for displaced people. I see the figure of the "Thinker" sitting above the suffering, observing, thinking with every muscle and wonder if Rodin or Hitler or Bührle saw themselves in this figure.

Of all the institutions that promise to take care, the state is the most all-encompassing one. It feeds the delusion of care through divide and rule and "un-caring" of the ones it positions outside its borders[1]. It vows to be the great caretaker of citizens, their well-being and safety, of national good and international order. To fulfil this pledge, it rather highlights accomplishment and hides malfunction, adapting official narratives towards the effect of necessity and the absence of alternatives.

Like the nation state the family seems to be *natural* - as if there were no other ways to organize social life amongst humans. "Like a microcosm of the nation-state, the family incubates chauvinism and competition. Like a factory with a billion branches, it manufactures 'individuals' with a cultural, ethnic, and binary gender identity; a class; and a racial consciousness."[2] The impression of naturalness normalizes violent exclusions that make the formation of an exclusive unit possible. It stabilizes the enforced order, maintains the limited space for some individuals to take their seats at the representative table while others serve in invisibility. To push past and present costs of the comfortable good life, filled with nice art pieces and good memories, out of sight, is a move realized within and by the father and the family, the museum and the state. They share the same patriarchal authority that normalizes violence in the name of progress, wealth, stability and freedom.

What the Gates and family have in common, is the fixation of a specific idea of life, of *the good*, *the beautiful*, the *natural* and *normal*. The sinful go to hell, the ones free of sin can sit at the family table in their safe space and observe the suffering.

1 Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung (2021): The Delusions of Care, p. 35

2 Sophie Lewis (2022): Abolish the Family. A Manifesto for Care and Liberation., p. 6

_____

MUM DOES THE WASHING / GOSSIP / SEEING THE COST

Rodin's "Gates" show the artist's interpretation of the human condition as suffering and precariousness. Some people see the similarities between his modelled figures of naked bodies and images documenting hysterical attacks, taken in Paris, where he lived and worked, being big friends with the leading medical of hysteria research and treatment.

The artist is highly praised for his magical hands moulding the figures. Some people say his student and partner Camille Claudel not only modelled for him but also fashioned the hands of his sculptures. She always stood in his shadow, spent 30 years in psychiatric institutions, and was only recognized for her artistic work after her death.

did u ever wonder

how this world finds back into place after

a full day of a million things being done by all of us?

it seems to happen as if by an invisible hand

magic

do u remember waking up as a child in the morning

to a full new day ahead of u, with a chance that all the ghosts from yesterday could be gone?

washed away by the rain

reset, delete, maintain, cultivate, empty, refill, foster, carry away, bring anew, reproduce, put back, clear up, hold together, preserve, clean, polish, wipe, care, love, work

the present keeps track of the past in strange ways

good morning, did u have a dream?

Reproductive labour is privatized and individualized, nothing we do together, but everyone alone takes care of their own shit. It happens behind the scenes, so that one could believe the dirt continuously produced by all of us would disappear by itself. Care work is structurally pushed to the margins of *modern life* in *civilized* societies, not only marginalizing the activity itself but the people who do it, often reduced to their work, only valued as human resource, as work time, as executing body. Invisible, it becomes a standard, granted, natural and normalized. It becomes part of the architecture we move thru that things are clean, at their determined place, in order, in control. How this cleaned up state of the world comes into being is out of focus, time is happening now, oriented towards the future, it is not relevant what was before. There is a detachment from the necessity of care taking as "Mum Does The Washing" or somebody else that we don't even know. There is a denial that its essential for surviving. This *contemporary* lifestyle of detachment and denial is possible thru privilege enabling for some to not do any reproductive labour at all and to live life as if it wouldn't cost a thing. It's the lifestyle of Western society, of the rich, of White supremacy, of the individualized way of life where we strive to reach a life standard without having to clean up.

When I started saying "Thanks for cooking" at the family dinner table, my mother, my father and other older cookers often reacted not at all or with a version of "sure!" that sounded like a blame. As if me thanking would include questioning the naturalness of this circumstance. Instead of appreciation it sounded like criticism to them.

Care taking in a sense of responsibly looking after oneself and each other. Being aware of the work that is sustaining our world and our life being done right now, yesterday and tomorrow. Being aware of the patriarchal, colonial and nationalist-fascist violence still shaping this place and this time.

Taking turns to do the work, share, acknowledge, clean up collectively without concealing guilt and accountability, practice family beyond blood lines, ideas of owning, similarity, genealogy, nationality and uniqueness.

The past ain't over, but reaches into the present and the future, no matter if we try to ignore it or not. As we are keeping the gates supposed to separate artificial units of time from each other, we can decide to open the doors, destroy the division of time-space and maintain a space that connects.

Facing Germany's genocidal history means discomfort not purification. Cleaning that doesn't wash the guilt away but makes it approachable for scrutinization and the allocation and the understanding of accountability.

At the bottom of the Gates of Hell, we can find the "Kingdom of Mothers". This is the place where life seems to come from at the beginning of the journey to hell. This could be the place to occupy together, mothering each other, practicing family as integrative care taking of one another as a counter practice against the nation state. Abolish the institution that pretends to save us and engage in the doing, the work. Gossiping about Germany. Cheating on the fatherland.

tbc

tbc

tbc

tbc

Joshua Idehen - Mum Does The Washing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PS9Bc_GQBEs

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SEEDS OF SURVIVAL

AT THE EDGE OF THE DESERT

by LIOS Labs

* Authors of the text: Gal Sherizly, Jojo Vavra, Jagna Nawrocka and Xtina Ariaz

Li (理) - in Cantonese and classical Chinese cosmology—refers to the underlying pattern, principle, or texture of things: the intrinsic order through which life unfolds. It is not a fixed law, but a structure for living relational — the grain of reality, the flow of coherence that weaves beings, materials, and phenomena together.

In LIOS Labs, Li becomes both a spatial and temporal system—a way of perceiving and operating within the world that follows the inner pattern of ecosystems rather than imposing form upon them. Li guides how we inhabit time and space: through attunement, reciprocity, and co-creation with the elements.

Thus, LIOS can be read as a laboratory of Li—a field for sensing and enacting the deep structures of interbeing, where artistic, ecological, and social processes align with the subtle order of life itself.

LIOS Labs is a community, and, formally, an association, of artists, activists, and researchers from around the world. We came together in Berlin in 2019, inspired by the Błędowska Desert in Poland - a place that became both our starting point and the heart of our work. As a community, LIOS operates like an ecosystem: self-organizing, interdependent, and porous. Its members collaborate across geographies and disciplines, guided by a sense of planetary kinship and responsibility. Participation in LIOS means living and learning together, listening deeply to the more-than-human world, and experimenting with new forms of coexistence and collective imagination.

Today, we're a network of agents living across the globe, connected through annual artistic residencies, workshops, and gatherings. Our focus is on shaping ways of learning with and creating with ecosystems that have been affected by desertification and ecocide. We believe that art and ecology can weave new worlds—worlds where regenerative ways of living become possible.

A methodology of co-creation rooted in ecological awareness and relational practice. We operate through Li - the underlying pattern, or living web that connects all beings and elements - and OS (operating system,) a dynamic space-time field where this pattern unfolds through artistic experimentation.

As a methodology, LIOS proposes a way of cohabiting (living, working, coexisting) that is at once spatial and temporal, artistic and ecological. It invites participants to tune into the rhythms of the life-giving forces — earth, water, fire, air, and ether — and to let these forces shape both the structure and the pace of collective work. Rather than designing from above, LIOS evolves from within ecosystems, following the logics of reciprocity, care, and regeneration.

GLOSSARY TERM "Interconnectedness"

Interconnectedness refers to the state of being connected or linked together. It highlights the idea that different elements or entities within an ecological system are physically or functionally connected to one another. It emphasises the tangible relationships and networks that exist, such as the flow of energy, the transfer of nutrients, or the interactions between species within an ecosystem. Interconnectedness emphasises the observable and measurable connections within ecological systems.

Interconnectedness and relationality share similarities, however there is a subtle distinction between the two concepts. While interconnectedness focuses on the tangible connections and linkages within an ecological system, relationality adds a deeper layer by emphasising the dynamic, reciprocal, and often intangible relationships and interdependencies between entities within the system.

THE HONORABLE HARVEST

KNOW THE WAYS OF THE ONES WHO TAKE CARE OF YOU, SO THAT YOU MAY TAKE CARE OF THEM.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF. BE ACCOUNTABLE AS THE ONE WHO COMES ASKING FOR LIFE.

ASK PERMISSION BEFORE TAKING. ABIDE BY THE ANSWER.

NEVER TAKE THE FIRST. NEVER TAKE THE LAST.

TAKE ONLY WHAT YOU NEED.

TAKE ONLY THAT WHICH IS GIVEN.

NEVER TAKE MORE THAN HALF.

LEAVE SOME FOR OTHERS.

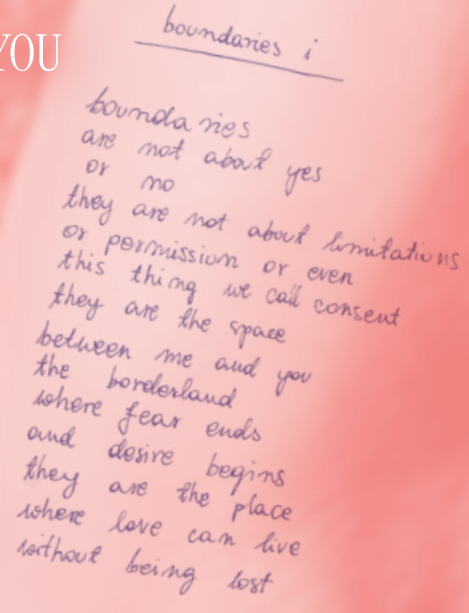
HARVEST IN A WAY THAT MINIMIZES HARM.

USE IT RESPECTFULLY. NEVER WASTE WHAT YOU HAVE TAKEN.

SHARE.
GIVE THANKS FOR WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN.

GIVE A GIFT, IN RECIPROCITY FOR WHAT YOU HAVE TAKEN.

SUSTAIN THE ONES WHO SUSTAIN YOU
AND THE EARTH
WILL LAST
FOREVER.



Robin Wall Kimmerer

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants.

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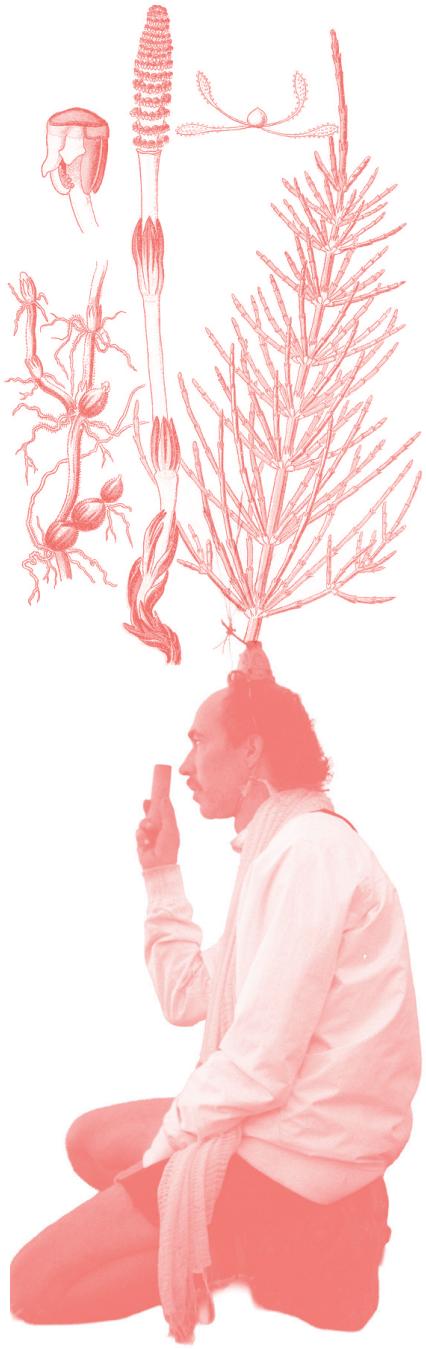
HORSETAIL / SKRZYP POLNY / EQUISETUM EQUISETUM ARVENSE

Equisetaceae family. Relatives: *E. fluviatile*, *E. hyemale*, *E. sylvaticum*
Planet: Saturn Element: Earth / Properties: Cooling & astringing / Qualities: clarity & structure



An ancient plant from the dinosaur era that used to be the size of huge pine trees. You can find Equisetum arvense at the fringes of lakes, rivers, and swamps, in damp sands and soil—indicating the relation to kidney stones and to sand and urinary gravel. They are strong antiseptic medicine for wounds and inflammation, bringing flow in the sticky spots of the blood vessels.

This fluffy tail stands firmly while having a tender appearance. E. arvense gives an inner strength to the body and the softened self. Can be used in cases of nervousness and weakness. With its strong architecture, horsetail enhances the resilience of protective membranes towards the exterior and facilitates fluid circulation internally.

Kitchen: The firm sharpness of them is a result of high concentration of silica, making them a natural pan scourer as used by Romanies and peasants.

Music: Hollowed-joined stems are employed in moulding the reeds utilized in reed instruments like clarinets or saxophones.

Magic: Horsetail is associated with definition and resolvement of boundaries.They have the ability to strengthen affirmations and confidence, as well as shield an individual's psychic realm from unwanted intrusions. Horsetail assists in purifying the system by eliminating unwanted emotional remnants and debris.

Dose: Very potent plant: Standard brew (1/2 handful of the whole plant + 3 cups of water) 2 teaspoons morning and night. Tea made of decoction or an alcohol-based tincture. External use: crush the herb into a soft, wet, shapeless mass, dissolve well in warm vinegar (1 handful of herb + 2 cups of vinegar). For treatments of wounds, dilute the vinegar brew with two parts of raw milk.

Somatic: This horsetail somatic activation is easy to practice even in a large crowd, as you can do so without others taking notice. It is a simple and helpful practice when feeling anxious, nervous, or uncentered. First find a place where you can be in presence with yourself. Stand with feet becoming roots into the earth, becoming aware of your breathing, without any control, just observing the air acting upon your body. When you are ready, imagine the breath rising up your legs and entering the pelvis, filling every disc with fresh winds. Your breath grows deeper as it travels upward through each vertebra: sacrum, low back, mid back, upper back, neck, crown. Pause for a moment at the top, tall and supple, holding this breath then exhale back down the same route. Repeat this several times, feeling the body become both rooted and elongated, feeling the clarity of your own axis; as if your whole spine were a living horsetail—each disc supporting the next, breath flowing through the strong and flexible architecture connecting you to sun and earth. Imagine now the breath going through this central axis of the spine and spreading to wherever the uncentered feelings are in the body. Use the power of the breath to "scrub" this feeling with loving awareness. Yes, allow the feeling to remain if it wishes, simply use the breath as a supportive friend that helps you stand tall. When returning to what you were previously doing try to reconnect with the breath flowing through the spine from time to time. Checking in and continuing to recalibrate and center yourself without judgement.

NETTLE / POKRZYWA ZWYCZAJNA / URTICA URTICA DIOICA

Urticaceae Family. Relatives: *U. urens, U. thunbergiana*
Planet: Mars / Sign: Aries / Element: fire / Properties: warming / Qualities: energy boosting, mothering

Nettle a.k.a stinging (heavy) nettle grows on the side of the road, on wasteland, not too far from human activities, where human and non-human release their toxins. Nettle helps the soil and the body detoxify from heavy metals and things that no longer serve us: diuretic agent, blood-cleanser, expelling gravel and stones from different organs, as well as mucus from the whole body. From roots to seeds, nettle is an iron and vitamins bomb that can be consumed freely: the perfect medicine for anemia. The hairy dark green leaves have a zigzag edge appearance. The acrid fluid in leaves causes a burning sensation and blisters for the human skin. As you feel the attacking pain you go back to yourself, feeling your physical boundaries while the burning sensation lights the inner fire, calling for self-care. Nettle is an energizer to stimulate and wake up your being, to feel the self again. Internally, nettle sensitizes the nerve and tissue which soothes paralysis, stiffness of the joints, and strengthens the muscles.

Kitchen: chips, risotto, soup, pesto. The leaves can be cooked shortly and used as a veggie, or a base for herbal butter. Top your oats or smoothie with 2 teaspoons of seeds. In Taiwan the Japanese Nettle (U. thunbergiana, 咬人 貓) is used to prepare 咬人貓麵包 (yaˇorénmao; literally: “biting cat bread”).

Magic: Nettle embodies the magic of mothering, nourishing her children with building blocks to construct healthy and strong individuals. Nettle’ s sting is a protection mechanism that reminds us to honour her gifts. She teaches us about boundaries: one needs to approach gently and ask permission.

Dose: heat the seeds gently in wine and swallow for curing diarrhoea and dysentery. A wine glass of standard brew three times a day for blood cleanse and worms expel; cold-pressed nettle juice. rubbing bruised leaves to treat chronic rheumatism; Romanies beat the affected parts to create immense heat in the limbs. In between sessions they applied cotton cloths that were soaked in cold vinegar and waited several hours until the next nettle flogging. To improve hair texture and colour, as well for removing dandruff, use the flower and seeds as a hair rinse or scalp massage

NETTLE IS AN ENERGIZER TO STIMULATE AND WAKE UP

Reflection:
When have I played the role of stinging nettle in someone’s life? Who has played it in mine? In what ways have these painful experiences been supportive to my overall sense of self?

ST JOHN'S WORT | DZIURAWIEC ZWYCZAJNY | HYPERICUM PERFORATUM

Hyperaceae Family
Planet: Sun / Sign: Leo / Element: Fire
Properties: warming / Qualities: reflection and protection

The flower a.k.a "the flower of the fairies" symbolises the beginning of summer, blooms around St. John's Day and the summer solstice brings the sunshine energy from within: remember this companion when feeling stressed, depressed, anxious or having a nervous breakdown. Clinical trials show STW is very effective with mild to moderate depression. Found on poor soils, the plant's present is a call for agency: fertilise this abandoned land and are also associated with Jarylo, the proto-slavic god of summer vegetation and fertility. The yellow flowers relate to the solar plexus connection, supporting the digestive system and soothing menstrual cramps and irregularities. The plant brings the emotions and thoughts into synchronicity with our deepest intuitions, helping process overload of information. They have antiretroviral properties, which have shown good results for HIV+ patients.

Perforatum (=holes) denote the perforation structure when holding the leaves up to the sunlight—a medicine for the pores of the skin. Place the bright yellow flower in water, oil, or alcohol and you will receive a liquid red as blood—treatment for wounds, in particular for injuries around nerves, where sharp objects might have penetrated the skin violently, or a sudden movement may have occurred.

Kitchen: traditional mead is made with fermented honey and St John's Wort. Adding these flowers to your salad will brighten your plate.

Magic: Protection from demons, witchcraft and lightning comes useful in the middle of deserted areas. In the woods along bodies of water and rocks lay invisible "holes" leading to the underworld of the Little People. The fairies are wise creatures who know the secrets of the natural world, dreamtime, and seership. Listen to your dreams and visions, they are speaking to you, they want to heal people's "holes". If you ever get lost in the woods, place and offer for them and you will find your way.

Dose: mother tincture, salve, cream, oil, tea or decoction of the whole plant.

Somatics: place your palms together at your diaphragm. Connect for a moment to your heart and energy. Imagine that energy going from your chest, down your arms into your hands. Begin to rub your palms like you are starting a fire. Rub them intensely for at least 1,5 minutes. They will feel like there is a real fire there. (Keep going!) When it's thoroughly hot, press your hands together feeling all the energy in your hands and then VERY SLOWLY pull the hands apart. Just like the St. John's Wort carries the energy of the sun, so do we—feel all the energy from the food you ate, that grew under the light of the sun pulsing between your hands. If you want to keep playing with the energy by playing with the shape and distance of your hands to each other. You can bathe in your own sunlight by turning your palms toward yourself and sensing what you feel.

BLUEBERRY MEDITATION

DANCING WITH THE WINDS:

:THE SOMATICS OF SEED DISPERSAL

Nirmal Singh Soin
In Arabic, there are maybe a dozen words!
One of them is hawa, which translates to
the beginning of life. In Urdu, hawa
air, or wind. Then in Sanskrit, in the
Another one is hilli, meaning reed,
meaning something that could bend
and bloom. So many words for fire.
language helps us find ways to forge
new futures. When they come to burn it all,
maybe one of the dozen words would escape,
fly away like a seed carried by the wind.

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SITTING ON A CHAIR

by Ula Liagaitė

Ula Liagaitė (she/her) is a transdisciplinary artist who works in dance, choreography, and contemporary performance, engaging with the fields of ecofeminism, queer theory, and environmental studies.

Her practice is built on sickness as a generative set up - understanding the (human) body, and, by extension, social systems, as capable of fixing itself when given appropriate care, time and attention. This idea can be brought to various contexts and applied to different structures, such as family, education and health care systems, society etc. This pattern of thought is inspired by Johana Hedva - a contemporary artist, writer, and musician and driven by an ongoing interest in various healing practices and conversations about what it means to be healthy and what it means to keep going?

edited by Cru Encarnação

GLOSSARY TERM "Stretching"

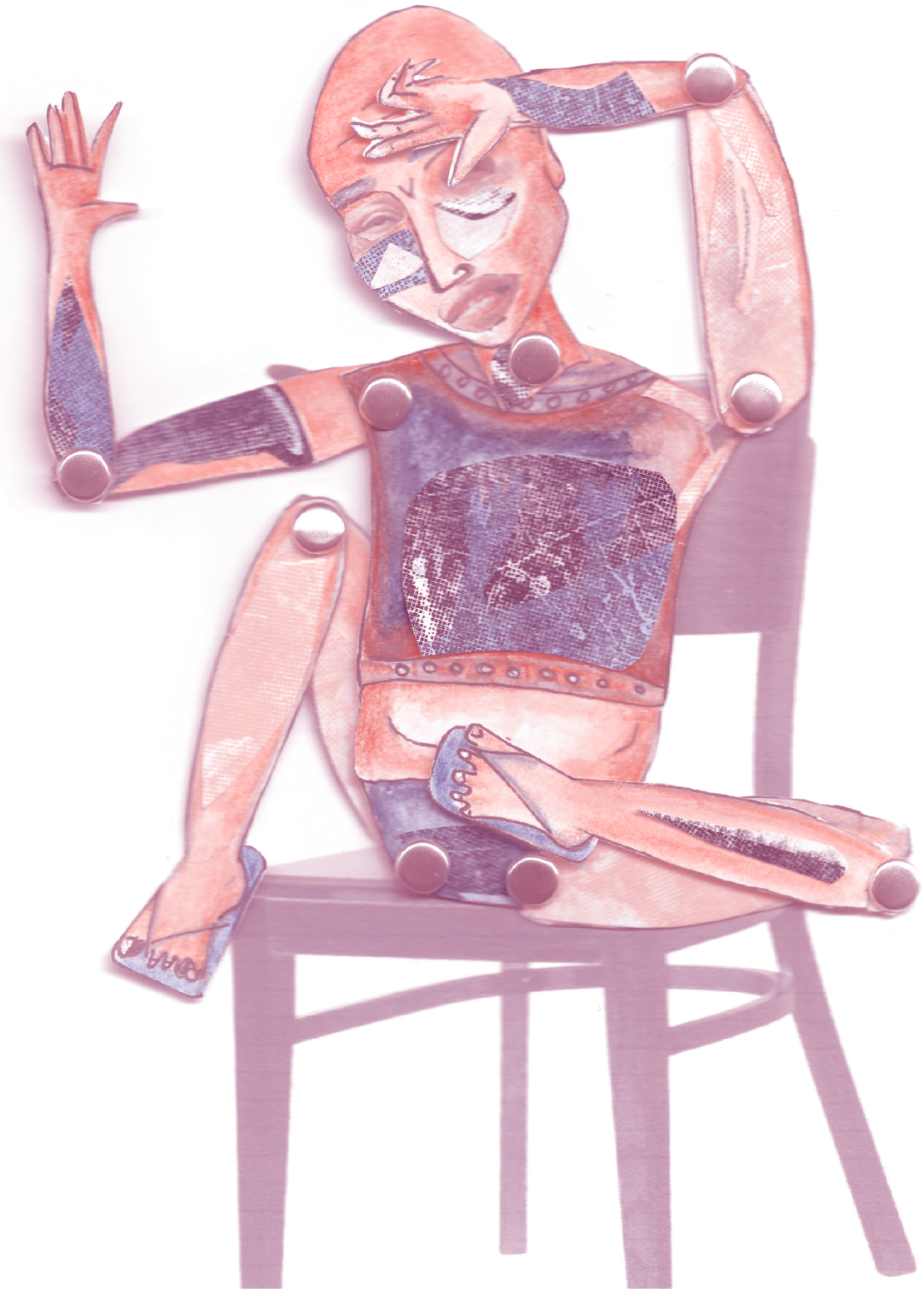
A verb. that can be used to describe a gradual, overwhelming sensation of elasticity and expansion, not always pleasant nor voluntary. This term is particularly useful, when thinking of global warming and rising temperatures as a process that can be observed on various (human and more-than-human) bodies (as well as chewing gum).

Motionless, inert, like still life behind a canvas. The surface is flat, indifferently hard, the texture forgettable. Not standing, not standing up now. Instead, I am... immersed in that silent choreography of seeing. Apathy means the world to me, more than I can imagine... I am...

To be approached as a score and read out loud to yourself or someone else, while sitting on a chair. Notice what the repetition does to your body*

* a smart someone once told me that the most courageous and difficult thing to do in life is to sustain an action or practice for a long time

Sitting on a chair and not knowing how to get up
sitting on a chair after having heard bad news.
sitting on a chair, because legs don't hold no more
sitting on a chair and realizing something.



Sitting on chair for a long time
sitting on a chair and listening
sitting on a chair and being told something
sitting on a chair and learning
sitting on a hard chair.

Sitting with your legs crossed
sitting with your legs uncrossed
sitting on a chair and eating
sitting on a chair and watching a movie
sitting on a chair and working on the computer
sitting on a chair and reading a manual

sitting on a seat in a bus

sitting on a seat on an airplane, reserving your seat for an extra fee (and priority boarding).

sitting on a chair and doing nothing

sitting on a chair that is a set of many the same looking chairs, inside a building, that also looks like any other building

sitting on a chair 'just because'
sitting on a chair when not at all tired
sitting on a chair to watch a six hours long theater piece
falling asleep while sitting on a chair, falling asleep and
falling off the chair.

Sitting on a chair because sitting on the ground is bad
sitting on chair because the ground is dirty

sitting on a chair in clean clothes
sitting on a chair in white clothes
sitting on a white chair
sitting on a chair in church
sitting on a chair in a gallery
sitting on a chair in a museum
sitting in a chair in a university

sitting on a chair and not standing up... for anything
sitting on a chair and seeing your friends siblings
lovers strangers animals neighbours getting hurt
sitting on a chair and witnessing
sitting on a chair anxiously
sitting on a chair guilty
sitting on a chair because it's safe
sitting on a chair because you learnt it well

sitting on a chair that your gran grandfather bought
sitting on a chair and remembering that you did not
meet any of your grandfathers, cause they both died
from alcoholism
sitting on a chair wondering if this is the last time

sitting on a chair because you learnt it well
sitting a chair cause you have a chair to sit on
sitting on a chair made by suffering
sitting on chair and feeling the climate change
sitting on a chair and feeling the crisis
sitting on a chair paralysed by grief
sitting on a chair sick from grief

sitting on chair and making a plan
sitting on a chair somewhere else
sitting on a chair as it gets hot there
sitting on a chair watching people leave here
sitting on a chair being forced to stay
sitting on a chair cause there is no way out.

Sitting on a chair and not feeling pain
sitting on a chair since before being able to walk
being taught to sit on a chair
being good at sitting on a chair
sitting on a chair and pressing buttons
sitting on a chair and thinking about people that press buttons
sitting on a chair pressing buttons, that change the course of rivers and universe

sitting on a chair as an excuse
sitting on a chair and having lots of power on your hands
sitting on the chair while your mind does somersaults and fingers
well...

sitting on a chair and watching someone's mouth
sitting on a chair but very lightly
sitting on a chair and pretending to be reading
sitting on a chair and chewing gum
sitting on a chair that has chewing gum stuck under it by someone who was sitting on the same chair before
sitting on a chair and never ever again allowing fingers to wander under the chair sitting on a chair and peeling potatoes...

Sitting on a a chair that is unstable
sitting on a chair by the window and looking out
sitting on a chair very still
sitting on a chair and watching how everything around changes
sitting on a chair and noticing that nothing is ever completely still
sitting on a chair and watching life pass by
sitting on a chair forever
sitting on a chair and getting older
sitting on a chair and causing no trouble.

No trouble at all.

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A SOMATIC PRACTICE OF MULTIPLICITY

by CHIMERA

Chimera (Madelyn Byrd & Lou Croff Blake) is a queer artistic duo creating works that push the boundaries around what it means to be a citizen of Earth, merging artistic embodied experiments with science and fantasy. In 2025, Chimera's speculative worlding manifests in projects at AADK's Cruce program (funded by The Goethe Institute's Culture Moves Europe grant) and School of Commons' peer learning program (located at Zürich University of the Arts), and more.

Texts and images: Madelyn Byrd & Lou Croff Blake

GLOSSARY TERM "Monstering"

Evolving oneself into an entity that is more-than-human. Rooted in Sarah Ahmed's Queer Phenomenology, monstering is an inherently queer process. However, monstering can be practiced by anyone, as we queer neither gender nor sexuality, but rather queer our category of species.

GLOSSARY TERM "Chimerizing"

Embodying multiplicity, with the starting point of a system of three. The Chimera of Greek Mythology—a lion/goat/snake—teaches us that to be multiple is powerful, though it may result in being shunned by local farmers. We may chimerize our human bodies through somatic practices, which may allow us to relate more closely to the more-than-human; it is a specific sub-form of monstering.

1. NOTES ON CHIMERIZING

Collaborations as Chimera: Creative Duo

As friends and collaborators, our journey that leads to this practice has always been rooted in a shared Earth sensibility. Coming from different disciplines (and many dialectic oxbows), our combined body of knowledge and training spans sound art and music, neuroaesthetics and psychology, sustainability, fashion design, visual arts, writing, performance, and teaching. We funnel this odd multitool skillset in immersive artistic research that attempts to make sense of our place on this planet – developing and sharing practices to situate ourselves in ecology. We've embarked on projects that put our bodies skin-to-skin with the natural environment, scraped our knees, and plunged our hands into quicksand. We work with dancers to discover how movement might be a form of listening. We develop DIY meditations to tune into the Other – using each other as lab rats as we explore kinship with unexplainable phenomena. This all may sound very grand and poetic – but a core lesson we return to with every caper is that it is indisputably profound to go play outside.

As our work deepens and matures, and (bless) finds more fodder in humor and absurdity, we come to a state of easy access to our somatic landscapes. Through years of self-guided practice, we are both honed at attuning to our bodies, to our companions, to our environment. And so, sharing these exercises we've developed for practicing chimerical embodiment, we invite you into our world where we blur the lines of folklore and science. We invite you to become your own study of cryptozoology, to be generously playful in your speculations, to practice monstering with your friends and more-than-human neighbors. Learning to embody the Other is a method of ecological behavior.

A LEGACY OF MONSTERS

The Chimera is one of the great monsters of Greek mythology: a fire-breathing beast with the mixed anatomy of lion, goat, and snake. She (yes, female, according to the stories) was divine, descended from the great non-human gods who inhabited the world alongside the Titans. The legend, as told in Homer's Iliad[1], states that the hero Bellapheron, mounted on Pegasus, is ordered by the king of Lycia to slay the Chimera, who has been feeding off local cattle. Her death brought glory to Bellapheron, and Lycia was rid of a predator.

As Le Guin would put it, this, like many popular Greek myths, is a Killer Story: it is about the spear thrust, and death is its climax.[2] If we reposition the Chimera as protagonist (not hero, but main character), what would an alternative 'Life Story' be? We have a shining mascot of pluralism, subjected to a colonizing king's attempt to tame the wilderness into which his cows wandered. We have yet another story of a non-conforming creature punished for existing.

To become a chimera not only acknowledges the pluralities and complexities we contain, it challenges us to change contemporary narratives on queer monstrosity. In our lifetime, sex and gender-based identity politics have arced from a mass culture of homo- and transphobia, to slow acceptance: the legalization of gay marriage, the incredible milestone of the third gender marker "X" on American passports, and unprecedented strides of trans visibility in media and politics. Until... 2025. The sudden pendulum swing back to hyper-conservative governance across global northern nations has flipped so much recent progress into a regressive nightmare, with queer and trans people once again on the chopping block – illustrated succinctly by the Trump administration labelling trans people as "terrorists."[3] After the past decades of fighting to be protagonists, we are now, in the eyes of many in power, more monstrous than ever.

So, we crawl back to the protective mountains of Lycia, back into the mouths of our caves to lick our wounds and think: what next? We remember that monstering is generative – that learning to chimerize, to walk through the world carrying inner multitudes, also teaches us to be part of larger chimeras. We learn, from within our own bodies, how cooperative systems might mobilize. 'Queering' is, perhaps, not only for LGBTQIA2+ people; liberation from a learned identity doesn't always result in a change of pronouns, gayness, or hormone therapy. Similarly, 'monstering' is a lesson learned through queerness, but may also be learned by anyone. We all contain worlds. And, we are all organs in the body of the World.

RELATING THROUGH MULTIPLICITY

We draw inspiration from the Chimera's ability to be 'more than.' More than one self, more than one creature, more than human. Our embodied knowledge of multiplicity is a chimerical experience, moving through daily life as a coordinated system of parts, personalities, feelings. But what might be learned from a deepened concentration on these chimerical qualities? Through our somatic research on chimerizing, we propose exercises – which may be practiced by anyone – to tune into our cooperative parts. By feeling with different identifiable inner elements, we attempt to more intimately know what sub-bodies hide within us. We move with these parts, letting each take a turn in guiding the whole. And we may zoom out one degree to become one part in a cooperative system with other bodies – both human and non-human.

The Chimera, our mascot monster, is a trio of beasts: snake,

1 "Homer, Iliad, Book 6, Line 156." Accessed April 29, 2025. https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0012.tlg001.perseus-engl:6.156-6.190.

2 Le Guin, Ursula K., and Bul Lee. The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction. Revised single edition. [Gardena, California?]: Cosmogenesis, 2024.

3 "Equating Respect for Trans People With Terrorism Is as Dangerous as It Is Absurd | Outright International." Accessed November 28, 2025. https://outrightinternational.org/insights/equating-respect-trans-people-terrorism-dangerous-it-absurd.

goat, lion. Even though we are a creative duo, the three-body body (or, more queerly, body-ody-ody) is an arrangement we intentionally retain. While, obviously, our inherent multiplicities contain countless facets, focusing on a select system of three allows for dynamism, for drama and for contrast. It trines the binary. It beckons us with the "secret third thing."[4] Our working method, as a duo, also always holds space for this third: sometimes it is a peer collaborator, but more often it is the invisible Other that, like a muse, flies with and around us. Our third is possibilia, the not-yet-known.

2. EMBODIED CHIMERA EXPERIMENTS

Experiment 1: Body-ody-ody Scan

Description: A body-ody-ody scan is a queer, hydrofeminist approach to finding the multi-body in you! We queer, seep, leak, and ooze into and beyond ourselves; we feel into the world and the world into us. It is the goo-ification of self, the liquification of solid matter, the gentle poke and not-so-gentle knock at the limits of size, shape, and form. We scan our body in curious exploration to pluralize singularity; we fan out into (un)familiar dimension(s). Body sensation unravels into the multisensational as we give neurons & autonomy to points within. Like an octopus' sucker-covered arms, we act as if we contain mini-brains. Each point gathers sensory information to drive its own movements and desires. We share their desire to be more-than. We navigate the lines around what is, with a gentle nudge toward what if. Plunging our interiority, we deep-dive into crevices. Our egos recline, eavesdropping on whispering nooks and crannies. Turn the volume up: dialogue point to point, node to node, nucleus to nucleus. Feel how truly voluminous and voluptuous you are in your hot and complex body-ody-ody.

Directions: Begin by sitting or lying in a comfortable position, noticing how your weight is distributed and supported. Close your eyes. Note your physiology: the rhythm of your breath, heart rate, areas of pleasure & comfort or tension. Notice how the environment interacts with you - the scents, sounds, and sensations. Instead of a traditional head-to-toe scan, we'll move through the body non-hierarchically.

Choose three regions of your system that are particularly interesting right now. Maybe they're quiet and tender, pulling inward, or perhaps they're loud, reaching outward into the world. These will become our three points of interest. Notice the size and shape of each point, where they sit in relation to the rest of your body— - anterior, posterior, dorsal, ventral.

Experiment 1 Transcription

Okay. I was feeling that my right side was orange and my left side was blue. I started pinwheeling those colors, dividing them into a top half, bottom half - four segments, shifting between blue and orange.

My right side felt scrunched, like a slinky. I'm toppled over on my right. And the left feels more open and spacious—counterbalancing the squished right side of my body.

I noticed a micro muscle right above my right ear, this crazy shivering twitch. So that point is loud.

I feel blobby and wave-like, imagining myself as a cell floating in this room, like a body of microbodies.

My shoulders started to feel really tall and spiky. It's interesting that you felt like a cell floating. For me, I felt incredibly bound and locked in, like a crowded factory, like an apartment building itself.

Interesting. I saw a time-lapse of seals today ~ floating and playing on the surface of a pool, then napping blobs bobbing at the bottom. Their day-long existence sped up over the span of 15 seconds.

Oh wow.

That's kind of how I feel as a cell.

I also was feeling a sense of porosity and transparency, a reminder of how much negative space is in our bodies

- microscopic negative space between particles, right?

We are not all matter, and that felt much lighter, calling attention to the sense of spaciousness.

The space, air, fluids that are us and not us... It's interesting... we're here and not here, composed of space and counterspace, matter and anti-matter.

The feeling of density. The lack of density... So, my three points are the twitch above my right ear. And this one vertebrae before my tailbone, which I imagine as a dark, bluish purple. The third is the space right between my collarbones.

My first point is the slinky sensation in the tension in my right waist. When I zoom in on it, it's my right ovary, maybe? I'm feeling a lot of empathy for this busy part of my body. My second point is just inside my second-to-last rib on my left ~ a bit of a counterpoint to the weightiness of my right ovary. And my third point is the lymph nodes in my throat. They feel a little swollen.

4 Know Your Meme. "A Secret Third Thing," September 1, 2022. https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/a-secret-third-thing.

Experiment 2: Body (Counter)Mapping

Description: Following the body-ody-ody scan, body (counter)mapping imprints our three points of interest onto a somatic cartography. We liberate ourselves from psycho-logic; the body knows best. We examine interrelations, echoes, and agitations between points A, B and C. We weigh their trigonometry for emotional congruence: how do the other points support and inform point A? B? C? We champion our fantastical appendages' desire to be slimy, permeable, feathered, and scaled; to protrude or recede; to extend or retreat. We world-with our skin-sack nodules; we texturalize, color, and voice their terrain. We move through an inner-corporeal hall of mirrors to (re)construct our somatic armour.

Directions: Extending from the body-ody-ody exercise, find your breath and the subtle intelligence of fascia as an all-encompassing sensory net. Attune to the first point of interest in the body. Give a portion of consciousness to this point, allowing it to sense, think, and develop its own interiority while the rest of the self observes from a neutral distance.

From this newly animated point, trace a path through the body toward a second point. Crawling, swimming, or drifting inhabit the second point's terrain. Notice the arising temperature, texture, dimensionality, and mood as another transfer of awareness occurs. The process repeats as this second consciousness seeks out the third point, entering and awakening it with the same careful attention. Each point becomes its own body with distinct qualities, emotions, and subtle narratives that unfold within the larger organism.

Finally, the three distributed selves come into constellation, perceiving one another across an internal triangle. The third point returns to meet the first, closing the loop before all awareness slowly returns to its origin.

Experiment 2 Transcription

Sorry, I was a bit cold and distracted for that one.

When you weren't floating into other trains of thought, were there moments or qualities in the three points that felt evocative?

My ovary zone felt like a small, scratchy-soft pom-pom, but inside was filled with red, juicy, earth—like peeling open rambutan. It had a slow, geological intelligence—lithic. The interior felt ancient and dense; the surface had a contrasting, synthetic quality.

My side-of-head point had rippling, flagella-like textures—wormy, root-like legs extending from a top surface. It crawled quickly, hypermobile, a little irritable but not in a bad way. It moved easily down to a tailbone, my second point, a bulbous lava-lamp: chewy, translucent, sloth-slow.

My second point had two distinct personalities, connected in a disjointed way–stick-like tentacles linked by something porous, almost sea-urchin-like. It had a playful, trickster quality. It would reach toward the first point while that one stayed firmly rooted.

My lower two points felt rooted, while the head point buzzed with intensity.

The third point felt like two elegant tusks/tongues coming out of my throat that I could wrap, drape, or extend—sculptural, wearable. They were perceptible but untouchable for the other two.

My third point, the throat/collarbone, appeared bright green, cup-shaped, foamy, shy but curious. Its movement was a kind of jet propulsion, as though exhaling negative space.

Some of these qualities made so much sense—the ancient ovarian earth energy, the trickster energy near my lungs and rib cage, the slinky seductiveness of the lymphatic area, the grounded density of the pelvic zones. Thinking with these discrete body parts becomes its own imagination practice—anthropomorphic, yet still "us." When I focus on one part, I feel more creaturely, less human.

It all feels like the same thing. Fractals, man... (but we're not writing about fractals.)

Experiment 3: Dancing With Complementarities (i.e. movement practice for amateurs)

Description: "My knee sounds like a brassy trumpet! And yours can too!" After scanning and (counter)mapping three points, we accelerate into sound and motion. As a novice movement practice, we gently exteriorize the three islands of sensation—self-trust, humor, and patience are key. Each island becomes a kinetic creature: some send shockwaves through the whole system, some jolt from a tiny nucleus, some convulse dramatically, grind into the earth, or zestily twitch like startled wings. As each island becomes animate, their movements interact—cross-hatched rippling tides passing energy—some cooperate, others compete. They become worms, spools of thread, trumpets, metal steam vents. The islands form a strange internal ensemble, each with its own rhythm, texture, and sound, and the body becomes a site of collaborative motion, imagination, and cross-island dialogue.

Directions:

I. We gently animate the attributes of each point, as islands casting a tide into a bodily sea. Begin moving it in big, exaggerated waves, shaking or circling until you feel how far that motion can ripple through your whole structure—from scalp to toes to fingertips. Then shrink the motion into tiny, nearly imperceptible jolts at the island's core, like micro-seismic pulses. Cycle between large and small until you can feel the island's "range"—their explosive, minimal, sluggish, hyperactive, or manic motions. Move through your three islands one by one, discovering how differently each transmits movement through your body's architecture.

II. Once each island has a clear movement identity, begin linking them. Let one island send a current into the next, like neurons firing across gaps, beginning to communicate. Notice which islands protrude outward to move with others, which recede into a shy solo dance. Notice which stabilize, which arc across the core, or drag along the ground. Explore how they combine into strange composite waves: worm-grinds meeting wing-flaps, tensile spirals meeting sleepy stabilizers. Allow them to take turns leading, sitting out, or blending.

III. Assign each island a sound. It can be shrill, steam-hissing metal, crunching ice, a brassy trumpet, a subtonal drone. Some are loud, some are soft. Make the sounds (if you dare) while moving, or imagine them internally. Then, try relational movements with a partner: pick one island and let it move in dialogue with a partner's island, either mirroring, trading roles, or improvising alongside each other. Notice how the qualities of your islands shift when influenced by someone else's motion or sound. Share the islands, interacting with all six as part of a greater, planetary body.

Experiment 3 Transcription

There are things that are on the same side of the body, so it doesn't feel like...

Oh yeah, it's not like me.

Wait, so are you taking my knee and your thing at the same time?

Yeah.

Oh interesting.

Oh, or are we just trading?

Ah, so I'm moving mine. We're moving together,

I see okay.

Yes.

Yeah.

Hey.

Hey

Uhhh.

Alright, Interesting because they really stack.

Yeah, they really mirror. It's like mine's in front of the body, and yours is in the back of the body.

Yeah. And mine's... Yeah, this is similar, like...

This one makes more sense to me when I'm laying down, and I feel like I can really get into it. But standing up, it's interesting.

It shifts.

Actually, you can move down, too...

That's the beauty of moving in space.

It's a lot weirder. You can go in all directions.

Okay.

And the last being wrist angles.

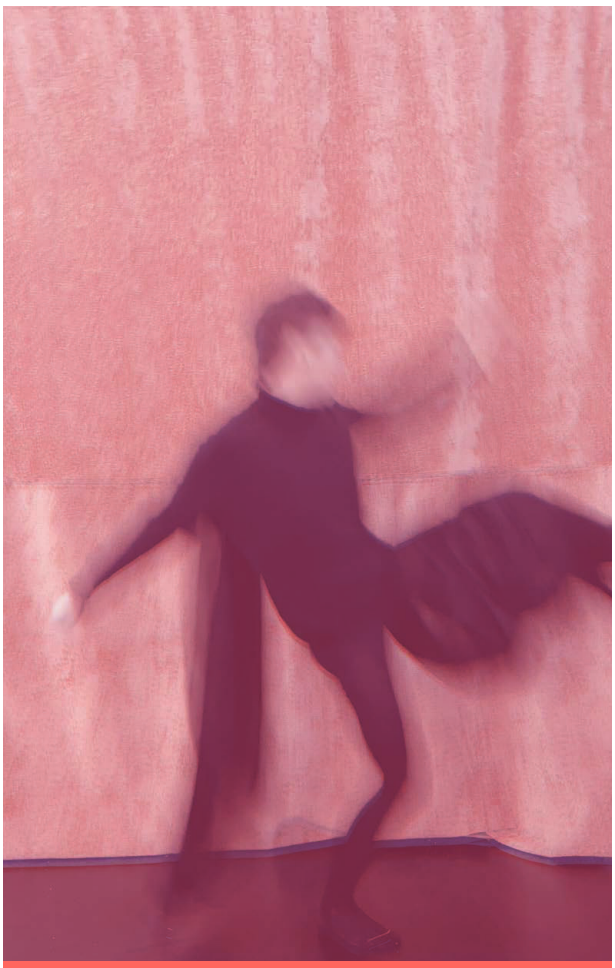
Interesting. I love to watch trance dancers do this.

Yeah. This is really fun.

Yeah, fun.

Yeah, that was nice. I think I need to get... I think I'm going to drink some water.

Great.



Experiment 3.1: Movement for knee

Experiment 3.2: Movement for wrist

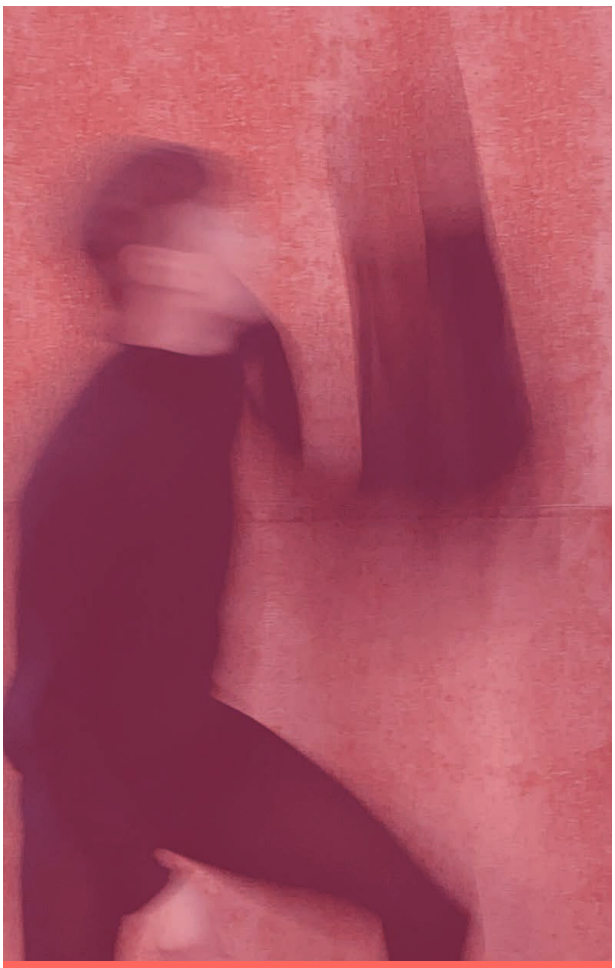
Experiment 4: Costuming the Chimera (Morphing the Body)

Description: Building on the movement practice, with the working system of three, we add a wearable element that enhances the felt sense of each point. We use a very simple element of a long piece of black fabric and safety pins. (We wear simple, all-black outfits as a base layer, to blend with the fabric). By balling, wrapping, and pinning this fabric into place on one of the points, two things happen. First, volume and weight are added to that part of the body, giving it a heightened sense of presence and altering its movement. Second, it changes the silhouette of the body as a whole, so that to an external eye, the subject becomes more 'creature.'

Directions: Start with point A (or whichever you please). Take a length (2-3 meters) of black fabric, and bunch it up / wrap it / pleat it / play with it around the chosen point. Allow the mood of the point to dictate the form; maybe it is tight and dense, maybe loose with a long train. Pin the fabric into place with safety pins. Begin to move, slowly at first, and test out how the added mass alters the movement of the point. Working with a mirror or a camera, observe how moving the point with mass changes locomotion. Observe how your silhouette may start to look less human. What do you see when your silhouette is warped by the massiveness of a dominant point? Working with an iPhone camera, we start to see not-quite-human forms in the blurred, low-res shots of ourselves. Repeat this exercise with each point, and see how your edges transcend themselves differently with every new arrangement.

Note: wear a base layer that you don't mind possibly tearing small holes in, as the movement, when rambunctious, may tear the garments.

Experiment 3.3: Movement for clavicle



Experiment 3.4: Movement for hand

Experiment 5: Moving Into The Multi-Body Body?

Provocation: What happens when three body-ody-odies practice chimerization together? Moving through a tuning process together, may three individuals become the three points in a conglomerate chimera? This process is akin to morphing from an organism into an organ in a larger organism. Incorporate costuming to connect the bodies. How do you move? How do you coordinate, cooperate, and communicate?

In Zurich in the summer of 2025, at the School of Commons cohort meet-up, we tested this experience with our peers in a workshop, Stretching Into Chimera, in collaboration with Ula Liagaite. We invited a group of 18 to move with complementarities in their bodies, and then to move as one, cooperative body. The memory— – confirmed by a poorly cropped iphone video— – is of a flailing mob of newly-made friends, and by the end we were all laughing.

3. INTEGRATING THE MONSTER

"Not simply tolerating difference, but actually understanding that reality is constituted not only by many worlds, but by many kinds of worlds, many ontologies, many ways of being in the world, many ways of knowing reality, and experimenting with those many worlds."

– Amaya Querejazu, 2016[1]

TANGLING

As ecological artists, chimerizing is one of many possible paths to relating to the more-than-human. In the wake of increasing warfare and a dismal recent COP30 conference, the climate crisis is inevitable. It's happening right now, in fires and hurricanes and mass extinctions, with more looming catastrophes that will hit those with the least amount of power the hardest. We, along with the rest of the global ecosystem, are in danger, and we're all tangled in it together. While we, as humans, have a handful of apathetic billionaires deciding this fate for the rest of us, we still have a duty to protect our planetary neighbors who had no say in it, and who cannot verbalize their needs in the same languages we speak. This task is beyond daunting, but to 'check out' is an all-too convenient response – and it isn't an option.

We are interested instead in toolkits that allow us to 'stay with the trouble.'[2] While Harraway's framework is cited broadly and liberally in circles close to ours, we must return to it again and again. Her words on interspecies entanglement and response-ability– – our agency as human neighbors– – provides us some clear direction, a call to action. There is no limit to the methods we can and should explore to root ourselves in an ecological pluriverse. We also came across the term panpsychism in the writings of Rebecca Tamás– – a word for the ubiquitous presence of consciousness. Everything– – both organic and inorganic– – has an expression of thought. While the science behind the concept is a bit fringe, lying in the realm of post-materialist quantum physics, the poetry of it is ancient and palpable. But if we push a step further and blur the lines of ourselves as conscious units (a common theme in our research, also adopted from quantum physics), we wonder: does 'thought' bleed across the dissolving barrier of I:We? If everything is thinking, including each insect, stone, and body of water in our planet's doomed habitats, and chimerizing into our environment allow us to think with these other bodies? When we are all the same global body, wouldn't we think and feel as one?

After we filter theory through somatic practice, we remain open and aware of how our exercises might bloom in daily life. Learning is never complete until it's integrated into our larger fabric of thought and behavior, and so our next step is to carry the lesson home from the studio.

A body is the hinge between inner and outer worlds. Our somatic knowledges of chimerizing, of monstering, and of queering, refract through our bodyies' senses, expanding subjectivity into a spectrum of external possibilities. The knowledge of one's own multiplicity– – as felt-sense, on the deepest physical level– – is a knowledge that mirrors truths of a multiplicitous world. The Chimera-as-monster changes from feared 'other' to protagonist... and this is a critical entry point to growing empathy for non-human.

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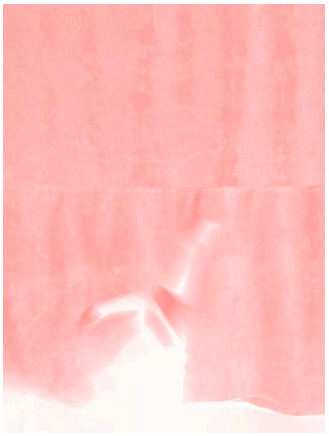
1 Querejazu, Amaya. "Encountering the Pluriverse: Looking for Alternatives in Other Worlds." Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional 59 (November 16, 2016): e007. https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329201600207.

2 Haraway, Donna J. Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene. Duke University Press, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373780.



EXQUISITE COMMONS

Glacier Rapport

AWOL

Remove, Keep, Define, Arrange

Hitching a Ride to Enough English

Radio-Dreaming into the Electromagnetic Commons

Shortwave Collective

Nora Sobbe

Mentoring as Practice

Colour, an inclusive visual language for climate communication

Yue Wu, Liliana Scapucci, Nina Buchmann

Jere Ikongio

Likon'yor - knowledge production through the unseen

ARCHIIIVE

(d)estructura

Common (d)estrucuras

Caro Bodensteiner

Notes on Practicing Family

School of Commons 2025

Colored Image Plates

Seeds for Survival at the Edge of the Desert

LIOS Labs

School of Commons 2025

Exquisite Commons

Sala de Tē

Tensile Paradise Field Manual

Ula Liagaitė

Sitting on a Chair

CHIMERA

A Somatic Practice of Multiplicity

Broudou School

ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

TENSILE PARADISE

by Sala de Té

Sala de Té is an itinerant tea room that creates a temporary space for knowledge exchange and deep listening practices. Founded in Mexico City in 2022, this collaborative practice utilizes a samovar tea set and a spread of mats, rugs, and cushions to create independent yet permeable architectures in public spaces. Participants co-create situated installations and narratives, proposing that serving and sharing tea is both an act of hospitality and a vector for critical pedagogies.

The hosts of Sala de té for the duration of School of Commons were Guillermo Martínez de Velasco and Layla Fassa.

GLOSSARY TERM "Tensile Paradise"

A tensile paradise recognizes social and physical tensions as sites of negotiation and productive collaboration. There are no blueprints. In negotiating the tension in the connecting cords between nodes, participants explore both the structure of organizations and how their organizing results in a physical and social structure. While paradise is not synonymous with utopia, flexible structures provide the resilience necessary to pursue utopian projects.

1) Conferencia de los pájaros I, Mexico City, 2022. Photograph. Courtesy of Sala de Té.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to outline the concepts, conditions, and basic components required to create a tensile paradise out of everyday materials.

1. To gather people together, you must present a clear end goal. In creating a tensile paradise, you are building a **tea room** [1].

    a) A tea room is a place to serve and drink tea with others.

    b) Tea is always free.

2. The promise of hot tea may not be enough to entice and motivate. This is fine, as there is a parallel goal: finding **paradise** [2].

    a) **Unwalled paradise:**
    While boundaries will undoubtedly be part of the emergent process of finding paradise, walls and fences are not [3]. These boundaries are negotiated and permeable.

    b) **Itinerant paradise:**
    A paradise that moves from place to place. While this movement affirms its existence in our physical world (ie, paradise is a place, not an allegory)[4], it isn't confined by permanent geographies or coordinates.

    c) **Tensile paradise:**
    A tensile paradise recognizes social and physical tensions as sites of negotiation and productive collaboration.

3. Paradise is not synonymous with **utopia**.
    Utopia is a term used in literature and political theory to describe an ideal society. Utopia, by definition, is something that can be strived for but never reached. When a utopian project is built around principles of exclusion, i.e., an "ideal" society free of certain ethnicities, sexual orientations, or health and disability conditions, it becomes a dystopia. Creating a structure collectively is a way to put into practice the utopian ideals of a society in which each one of us contributes according to our own capabilities and, in turn, is cared for according to our own needs.[5]

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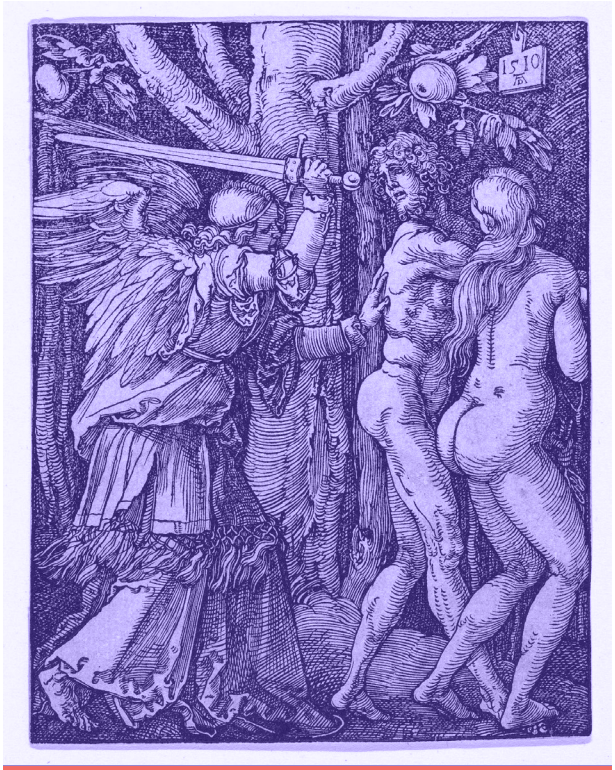
[1] Chaikhaneh (چایخانه) (tea=چا) (house=یخانه)

[2] While this term is loaded with meaning, particularly for those who live in cultures influenced or governed by Abrahamic religions, it is still ripe for new interpretations

[3] This is in opposition to the terms' etymology; the English word "paradise" meandered into this language via Latin and Greek, but its origins lie in Old Persian, /paridaydam/, 𐎠𐎼𐎡𐎭𐎹𐎴, meaning "walled enclosure." The Greek philosopher Xenophon, recounting histories of the Achaemenid Empire that he observed as a military general in those parts, is generally credited as bringing the cognate into Greek. "The word thus signifies a walled-in park of royal proportions. Within the embankments of enclosures, wild animals were stocked and hunted, gardens and orchards cultivated, a royal palace and pavilions on terraces built. To the ancient Persians the word 'paradise' was just used as a regular noun, sometimes plural in number." (Dustin Gish, "Xenophon's Cyrus in Paradise: Hunting and the Art of War in Antiquity," *Classical World*, vol. 117, no. 2, 2024, 125). These mundane and polyvalent forms of paradise, introduce ripe opportunities to revisit and expand upon the term in the present-day.

[4] Planetary paradise, that is, paradise that exists on our own planet Earth, and is accessible to us mortals, is nothing new. Catholic missionaries in 16th-century Mexico believed that Eden was near. "The concept of a terrestrial paradise was perfectly suited to the Utopian ideals that profoundly shaped mendicant thinking on arrival in the New World. The outlook of the friars was buttressed by the generalized conviction that the Garden of Eden was physically located in the newly discovered 'Indies.'" (Jeanette Favrot Peterson, *The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco: Utopia and Empire in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*, University of Texas Press, 1993, 138)

[5] Participatory and collaborative art, along with work that falls within the bounds of relational aesthetics, is tightly bound to re-interpretations of utopian ideals. Nicolas Bourriard refers to the functional, pragmatic "microtopias" of his gaggle of relational darlings (Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics, 2002); Claire Bishop finds that most of these so-called microtopias are still "predicated on the exclusion of those who hinder or prevent its realization" (Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," October, no. 110, Fall 2004, 68).



2) Albrecht Dürer, The Expulsion from Paradise, from The Small Passion, 1510. Woodcut. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Junius Spencer Morgan, 1919.

4. The central premise of what you are building is that of an **organized structure**: one that is not prone to falling or collapsing.

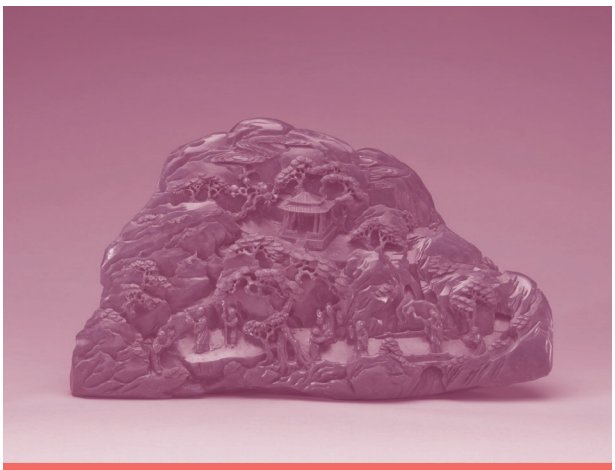
    a) Organized structures are constructed so that their individual components are arranged to interact with one another, resulting in overall structural stability.

    b) An organized structure results from efficient collaboration among people within different cooperative units.

    c) Creating an organized rope structure requires clear communication, planning, and execution. This will result in evenly distributed tension.

5. Typically, this is achieved most efficiently through a **structured organization**.

    A structured organization is a group of people who work together by assigning different roles to different members. By assigning roles to the group's members, efforts can be put towards smaller tasks that together make up the larger actions necessary to achieve a goal. Although members have assigned roles, no role is more important than any other, thus ensuring that hierarchies of power do not interfere with the group's functioning.



3) Boulder with Daoist Paradise, Qing dynasty (18th century). Nephrite jade. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Heber R. Bishop, 1902.

MATERIALS AND COMPONENTS

This section lists the Materials and Components you will need to find and have available in order to successfully construct a rope structure.

1. Acquire adequate **rope** for the structure.

    a) Rope is a fiber that is woven or twisted [5], noted for its length. Used for attaching (see also: knots), hanging, holding, connecting, lifting, lowering, measuring [7], sailing, building, recording information [8], and many other purposes. Several ropes woven or tied together can form other tools and structures, such as nets, hammocks, and tents.

    b) Use ropes to create the frame of your structure. This is done by achieving tension. Tension can be created through tying several anchor points together and connecting these to vertical supports. Tension can also be adjusted and redirected using pulleys.

2. All structures need **supports** at either end of a rope. These are also known as **discontinuous compression units** in tensegrity.

    To create the vertical supports for your structure, tie down sturdy objects, such as metal poles, broomsticks, wooden beams, etc., so they remain upright even if disturbed by movement or touch. To ensure structural stability, tension has to come from all sides equally.

[5] The act of twisting fibers into rope is not merely a means of binding them together, but a way of shaping the strands to share the burden. Through the turn of the braid, tension is dispersed, passing from fiber to fiber. Without this rotation, the shortest strands would be forced to carry the weight alone, strained far beyond their measure.

[7] In Ancient Egypt rope stretchers compared the lengths of rope with distances measured on the ground to survey and measure property. (Robillard et. al., 2011)

[8] Such as the Incan Quipú system which kept records using knotted cords. (Ascher & Ascher, 1981)

4) Anonymous, Ropemaker (portrait of Lorentz Sayler), c. 1425, from the Housebooks of the Nuremberg 12 Brothers Foundation, Archives of the Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg. Public domain.

3. While it is possible to create a tensile structure by using only knots and readily available structures around you, such as trees or public infrastructure, you might also need a stake to secure ropes to the ground [9].

   A stake is a stick you plant into the ground that, in becoming fixed to the earth, becomes an anchor point. Stakes are traditionally shaped so that the bottom part can wedge into or in between things, and the top part can be hammered in easily. They can take many different forms and are made of plastic, metal, wood, or other durable materials. Think of a stake as a giant nail that goes into the ground to hold things down.

4. This rope structure—this tensile paradise—is, as previously stated, a tea room. A samovar can be used to brew tea.

   a) A samovar is a metal vessel [10] used for preparing tea by heating and boiling water. The container includes a spigot for hot water and a chimney for releasing smoke and/or steam. A teapot with a high concentration of tea leaves is placed on top of the vessel, allowing for smoke and steam to maintain the brew's temperature. Water is served from the spigot straight into cups to allow for varied concentrations and consistently hot beverages.

   b) Ensure that there is ample access to water, necessary for brewing tea, washing hands, and cleaning used cups.

   c) When brewing tea using a samovar, black tea is traditionally used.

   d) The tea is often served in clear, preferably heat-tempered glass cups with handles, allowing one to view the depth of color of the drink.

5) Isma´il Jalayir, Ladies Around a Samovar, c. 1860. Oil painting. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

5. To boil water, energy must be released as heat; you will need to secure a **power source**.

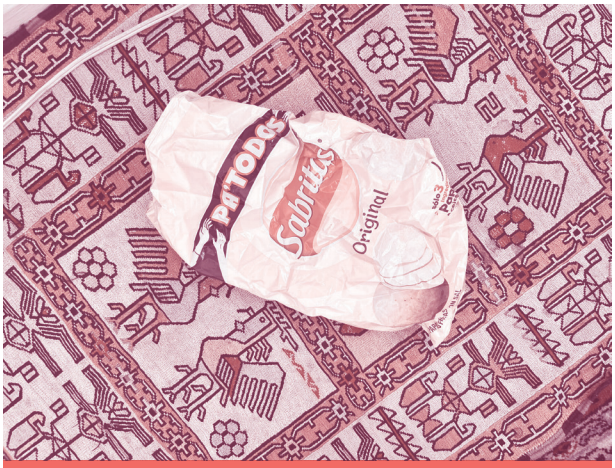
   a) A samovar might use scrap wood or pinecones [11].

   b) Or it needs electricity.

[9] To stake a claim is a metaphorical phrase used to assert the stakers' ownership over something. While this is often used in the context of land, stakeholders are entities (people, organizations, businesses, etc.) who are concerned with (involved or affected by) decisions made by an organization or company.

[10] Originally from Russia, this technology is widely used throughout Eastern Europe, Western Asia, and Southwestern Asia. This vessel simultaneously serves as a domestic technology and a social infrastructure.

[11] In the original iteration of the tea room, held at artist space compás 88 in July of 2022, the samovar was powered using locally available combustible materials. Sabritas-brand potato chips were used to initiate combustion. This was a pragmatic accelerant learned from survivalist instructional videos, where industrial starch and oil stand in for tinder. They were used to set fire to ocote (Pinus montezumae), a resinous pine native to central and southern Mexico and extending into Guatemala. The wood releases a strongly aromatic resin that ignites easily on contact with flame and has long been used as fuel. Its smoke functions not only as heat but also as an olfactory signal. These materials produce a hybrid fire whose smoke carries traces of resin, salt, and fat, binding the preparation of tea to local ecologies and contemporary circulations of knowledge.



6) Sabritas on a Persian rug, Mexico City, 2026. Photograph. Courtesy of Sala de Té.

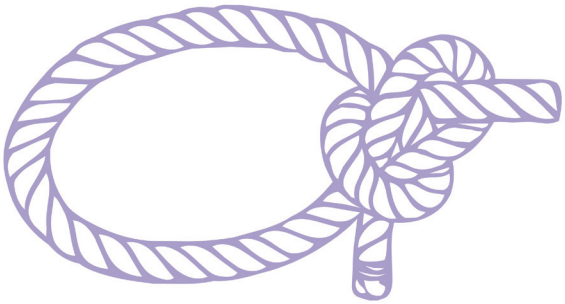
6) Provide floor or ground coverings such as rugs, blankets, petates, or other kinds of woven mats 12.

STRUCTURAL CONCEPTS

Below is a list of concepts and names for different parts of a rope structure. Knowing these terms is useful for acquiring adequate materials and promoting efficient communication between people building a structure.

1. Rope structures rely on knots to maintain structural integrity 13

A knot is an intentional complication of a corded line (see rope). It is made by interlacing, looping, and tightening a flexible line so that friction and tension lock the strands together. Knots serve a variety of purposes, both functional 14 and decorative 15. Popular knots that are useful for a rope structure include, but are not limited to: Bowline, Marline Spike, Clove Hitch, Two Half-Hitch, Versatackle, and Whipping Knot.



7) Lucasbosch, Bowline knot, 2011. Illustration. Wikimedia Commons. CC BY 3.0.

2. A tensile rope structure may use **tensegrity** to make sure that all weight and tension are distributed and resilient. Tensegrity is a structural principle that uses a balance of tension and compression to create stable structures. Portmanteau of "tensional integrity," coined by architect Buckminster Fuller.

8) S.Wetzel, Tensegrity, 2010. Photograph. Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 4.0

12 Stories are told through the horizontal plane of floor coverings. Woven rugs, from palm mats to Persian carpets, communicate comfort, utility, and mobility. Visual designs can indicate a sense of (dis)placement; the chaharbagh (چهارباغ) four-part garden designs reflect highly designed aristocratic gardens separated by waterways or quadrilineal paths, woven paradises that stay in full bloom despite shifts in climate and regime; the more contemporary so-called "war rugs," produced in Afghanistan starting from the Soviet occupation, grow out of this same tradition of depicting landscapes through fiber arts, but often feature complex botanical designs interrupted by cartoonish military helicopters and Kalashnikov rifles. More recently, these rugs have been colloquially dubbed in the West as "9/11 rugs," as they shift their representations towards US military drones, contemporary cartographic views of the country from an F-16's eye-view, and, of course, the downing of the World Trade Center in New York City. These artforms speak to the lived experience of the artisans while also catering to the foreign export market, the Orientalist desire to own an uncanny depiction of oneself as Occupier, forged from Othered hands and symbologies.

13 Knot-making is central to the praxis that allows us to embody theory beyond the tangle of language. We are informed by the work of educator James R. Murphy, whose method of using string figures to teach math to students "a way to involve the hands in order to unfold the brain's potential to think abstractly and problem solve." (Natascha Sadr Haghighian, How to Spell the Fight (Cairo: Kayfa ta, 2018), 6).

14 "At sea, the whole subject of knots is commonly divided into four classifications: hitches, bends, knots, and splices. A hitch makes a rope fasten to another object. A bend unites two rope ends.

The term knot itself is applied particularly to knobs (and loops, and to anything not included in the other three classes, such as fancy and trick knots)." (Ashley & Budworth, 1993 p.12). Splices are any kind of multi-strand knot.

15 Such as in crochet or Chinese knotting (中國結)

3. Both physical and social **tension** are necessary when building a structure and as part of the structure itself. Tension can mean (a) *Physics* Force applied to a flexible object when it is being stretched. (b) *Social* A situation or mental state resulting from opposing viewpoints, miscommunication, or ambivalent emotions. It is important to:

    a) Maintain physical tension using building elements and participant cooperation. Stones can counterbalance a rope that is attached to a tree, creating tension. One person can pull on a rope while the other ties a knot to an anchor point, maintaining this force, which is vital for structural integrity.

    b) Identify social tension as productive or nonproductive [16]. Situational awareness of your cooperative unit members' intentions and emotions is essential for maintaining social integrity. Sometimes it is best to speak of this tension out loud, while at other times it might be de-escalated indirectly. Tension that denotes differences in roles and responsibilities can be important for effective collaboration.

4. Use anchor points as a departure point when planning your structure. Anchor points are the parts of the rope structure itself that hold it down and provide tension. This includes weights, stakes, and pre-existing structures in the environment.

9) Anchor point [17] for a rope structure constructed by CNTE protestors, Mexico City, 2025. Photograph. Courtesy of Sala de Té.

5. Sala de té (tensile paradise, tea room, rope structure, etc) involves **spatial and social horizontality**. In its creation and use, we sit on the ground and grant each other the autonomy to manage ourselves without a strict hierarchy.

    a) Spatial horizonality is parallel to the line where the earth and the sky meet (horizon).

    b) Social horizonality involves working together or organizing without top-down hierarchies.

6. A **frame** is the skeleton of a structure. Frames can be covered with different materials to provide extra shade, insulation, weather protection, privacy, etc [18].

7. A **structure** is any kind of spatially aware object created through the use of physical materials. Typically, a structure creates a border between the space outside the structure and the structure itself. This can be walls, a roof, a fence, a ditch, a trench, etc. A structure creates an inside one can enter and an outside that lies beyond it [19]. Structures can range from completely impenetrable to permeable.

8. **Weights** are heavy objects that pull or hold something down [20]. Their density is high, and therefore gravity acts on them with greater force than the rest of the objects in the structure, pulling them towards the ground.

    a) Anchor points can be created using weights. They can also be used to create counterweights.

    b) To weigh something is to measure its weight. Metaphorically, to "weigh" a situation is to take note of all of its components and then draw useful conclusions about it based on these observations. It is important to weigh things such as fatigue, hunger, and interest levels, as well as expected weather, available time, materials, participant numbers, etc., in order to accurately make a plan.

9. **Cooperative Units** are the smallest divisible part of a productive and resilient organization. A cooperative unit

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[16] An example of productive tension are disagreements as to where to tie the rope; two people have different opinions on where the knot and anchor point goes. This allowed a third person to enter the discussion and use this tension and be decisive and determine the best option.

[17] The structure uses public drainage infrastructure and metal rebar.

[18] Traditional nomadic tents in Central Asia, such as yurts and gers, use dismantleable wooden lattices and tensioned ropes or bands to clamp the frame and fabric skin together. This allows the entire structure to be packed down, moved, and re-erected many times. Reusable frames such as festival pavilions, exhibition halls, and emergency shelters likewise depend on standardized members and joints. A single kit of parts can potentially be used to build multiple temporary spaces over time.

[19] Many contemporary projects treat the boundary between inside and outside as flexible, using lightweight membranes, mesh, or cable nets instead of solid walls so that the "inside" is defined as much by microclimate and social use as by heavy enclosure (Ching, 2014).

[20] Such as water jugs, stones, sandbags, blocks of concrete, bricks, heavy metal objects, or any other object.

consists of at least four people, each assigned one of the following four roles [21]:

a) **Communicator**: Communicators serve as liaisons between the other three unit members. They ensure that everyone is informed at all times of the state of the project as well as of the next set of steps that are to be taken. Communicators should pay special attention to make sure that connectors, planners, and support members are all informed of each others' progress, plans, tasks, and needs. They should also keep track of the time allocation in relation to the progress of the overall project.

b) **Connector**: Connectors carry out the manual tasks needed for the project to take shape. They connect the plan to the action. In a rope structure connectors extend and tie ropes to each other to build the structure.

c) **Planner**: Planners think of and discuss an initial overall structure or project goal with the other unit members and then coordinate with each other to make sure that tasks are completed as planned. In a rope structure project, planners take into account anchor points, vertical supports and connections in order to make a plan that evenly and efficiently distributes rope tension. Planners need to survey the project's progress and detect any weak points in the construction process or any breakdowns in communication and adjust the plan accordingly as it progresses.

d) **Support**: Supports make sure that the overall project is structurally sound by acting as the unit's on-site logistics hub. A support will keep track of resources and have materials, tools, and project information ready to go should it be needed by the other members. They also assist the other roles when extra labor is needed to ensure the smooth running of a project or operation.

SOCIAL, TEMPORAL, AND SPATIAL CONDITIONS

This section details the different kinds of actions, situations, factors, and dynamics you might encounter while working as a group building a tensile structure.

1. **Collaboration** [22] involves working as a group of people to achieve a collectively predetermined goal. It involves planning, division of tasks, resource administration, and task execution.

   To collaborate on building a structure, you need to get together with a team, source materials, develop a plan, divide tasks, allocate resources, and execute your construction plan.

2. In order to find resolutions to disagreements or problems when making a structure, one must first **unravel** the situation. Unravelling can mean to disentangle fibers, but also, to fall apart or become dysfunctional. It can also be used to talk about the explanation or investigation of a complex situation as it happens.

3. Structures are typically built outdoors. When this is the case, **climate** plays an important role in how this is done.

   a) **Climate resilience**: The ability of people, places, and systems to absorb and recover (often through strategic anticipation and planning) from climate-related disturbances while maintaining essential functions

   b) **Climate risk**: Potential future problems caused by, or associated with, climate change. These can be long-term shifts in ecosystems and/or extreme climate events.

   c) **Climate capitalism**: A system in which climate risk is addressed while preserving practices that cause climate risk, such as: extractivism, private ownership, profit incentives, overall growth-oriented economic models, etc. [23]

CNTE protestors sheltering under tarps during heavy rain, Mexico City, 2025. Screenshot from N+, "Plantón de la CNTE Resiste Viento y Lluvia en Pleno Zócalo de la CDMX," May 21, 2025. [24]

[21] Though arising from distinct national and ideological contexts, whether anti-Shah Marxism (Iranian Fadai), WWII anti-fascist resistance (Partisans), revolutionary syndicalism (IWW), Brazilian landless activism (MST), Palestinian national-liberation (PFLP), white-nationalist gym culture (Active Clubs) or a rebranding of Fascism (Patriot Front); each of these formations organizes its base through cooperative, self-managed units (cells, committees, working groups, settlements, five- to twelve-people crews, six- to ten-people clusters, etc) that collectively decide tactics, share labor and resources, and federate horizontally into broader networks rather than relying on top-down chains of command. Because every action is planned within these self-run, self-contained cells, the structure can bend, split or be dismantled at will. This makes these types of social structures harder to target and also makes it easier for them to re-group or adjust if any part is compromised.

[22] Comes from a Latin root that is roughly translated as "common labor".

[23] Examples of this are the Prototype Carbon Fund, a World Bank initiative backing projects like Brazil's Plantar eucalyptus plantations for pig iron production, which generate carbon credits by claiming avoided coal use while displacing local communities and expanding monoculture forestry. Another example are companies that rate carbon offset projects for credibility using AI, thus enabling continued high-emission activities via data centre emissions while also preserving market-based emissions trading.

24 In 2025, CNTE, the left-wing dissident contingent of the National Education Workers' Union (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores Educativos, or SNTE, the Mexican union for teachers which is the largest union in Latin America and the largest teachers' union in the Americas) staged repeated protests and strikes in Mexico City as part of a broader national movement by dissident teachers for the abrogation of parts of the country's 2007 educational reform law. They demanded better pensions and working conditions, and renewed dialogue with federal authorities. As part of this, they began building a dense encampment starting May 15th that served as both a living space and a protest HQ. Rather than erecting free-standing structures, the CNTE parasitized the city's infrastructure, producing a distributed structural field of membranes (tarps, plastic sheeting, and fabric) held together through networks of tensioned ropes and cords anchored to the existing urban fabric. The encampment provided a space for radical horizontality in protest decision-making that spread through its paths and meeting spaces and unfolded onto a continuous ground plane. The reduced distinction between "public" and "private" in the structure's low-lying roofs, raised pallet platforms, and the lack of fully separate spaces reinforced this horizontality, resulting in an architecture of communal disobedience. This resilient, adaptable architecture could withstand normal wind, rain, movement, and partial dismantling without collapse. However, the city's notoriously heavy summer rains came early and were particularly intense that year, with the June rains being the highest recorded in the last 50 years, according to the Institute of Atmospheric and Climate Change Sciences (ICAyC). The ICAyC points to hotter oceans and a particularly powerful start to hurricane season, with multiple storms forming in succession, as the principal cause of this increase. Coincidentally, May 15th was not only the first day of the encampment but also the official start of the Pacific hurricane season. And so, despite the union's chants of "NI LA LLUVIA, NI EL VIENTO, DETIENE ESTE MOVIMIENTO" (neither rain nor wind can stop this movement), the climactic conditions became too difficult for the encampment's structures and ultimately became a central defeating factor in the movement's effort to occupy public space. Tents flooded, clothes and supplies were soaked, and reports of spreading illness emerged. Although the CNTE's improvised construction gave the plantón a high adaptability factor, there wasn't sufficient collective knowledge of extreme climate conditions and architectures of climate resilience. Mexico's president, Claudia Sheinbaum, repeatedly stated that she would not send law enforcement to remove the protestors. She didn't need state violence; atmospheric conditions proved her greatest ally. The ICAyC points to the June 2nd rainstorm as the second-heaviest rainfall event in the city in June. The CNTE formally began dismantling the encampment on June 6th, despite not having achieved their policy goals.

4. To organize effectively within a group, **time** must be estimated, tracked, allocated, budgeted, and coordinated in relation to each task and each person's capabilities.

    d) **Time as a resource**: Time is limited and unevenly consumed and is needed by different people for different tasks in different amounts.

    e) **"Our sweet time"**: Idiomatic expression describing using time at a leisurely pace. Can have both positive and negative connotations depending on context. It is usually "taken."

    f) **Metabolic time**: Our bodies run on an internal clock tied to our sleep/wake cycle, eating times, and levels of caloric and mental energy. Paying attention to these levels ensures accurate planning and distribution of collective work.

    g) **Daytime**: The duration of time, separated by dawn and dusk, in which there is available sunlight 25. Daytime varies depending on the season, the position of the Earth in relation to the sun, and one's own position on Earth.

    h) **Tea time**: a unit of time demarcated by the start/end of serving and drinking tea.

25 Warmth, light, energy, circadian rhythms, artificial light, rest and recovery time.

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EXQUISITE COMMONS

ISSUES 2025

Works from the 2025 student cohort of School of Commons, hosted at the Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

BROUDOU SCHOOL

by Broudou School

Broudou School is a collective and multidisciplinary learning environment devoted to artistic research on ecology, agriculture, and food. Emerging after three years of independent research and publishing through the publication series BROUDOU, Broudou School explores the future of food from a decolonial, ecological, queer, and feminist perspective. Working alongside researchers, farmers, and artists, the collective organizes and hosts workshops, field trips, as well as experimental residencies and food experiences in collaboration with the artist residency and project space Mouhit in Tunis.

The learning platform will act as a meeting point bridging theory, creative practice, and embodied learning, where members can share their research and learn from people around the world facing similar challenges in the pursuit of social justice and food sovereignty

Collective members: Sara Bouzgarrou, Cyrine Ghrissi, Aziza Gorgi, Mary Sarsam, & Emily Sarsam

GLOSSARY TERM "Dialogic Decolonial Pedagogic Practice"

To build immersive, dialogic environments that link storytelling, sensory activities, and collective rituals, like gardening and cooking. These practices will examine how food, histories, bodies, and environments are connected.

GLOSSARY TERM "Field Work"

Reframed as an artistic and communal act, involving visits to farms, markets, or gardens to co-create knowledge with communities addressing postcolonial and ecological challenges.

GLOSSARY TERM "Constellations Toward Radical Ecologies of Care"

Deepens engagement with resilience, autonomy, and environmental justice. Through this, a nurtured pedagogy that bridges ecological awareness and creative collaboration, fostering old and new forms of care and resistance can be generated.

GLOSSARY TERM "Ksar"

A ksar is a fortified North African settlement designed primarily to collectively store, protect, and manage food resources, especially grain and dates, through shared granaries and communal systems that ensured food security and equitable access for the community.

Mobile Food Commons, by Broudou School

HOW DO WE GATHER AROUND FOOD DIFFERENTLY?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PRACTICE FOOD AS A COMMONS?

Mobile Food Commons is a moving body—a traveling kitchen, a temporary shelter, a place of encounter. Initiated by Broudou School through the School of Commons open call, it unfolds across territories as a series of pop-up spaces, online and offline gatherings, shared meals, and collective practices.

As it travels from one community to another, Mobile Food Commons invites people to gather around food as a living archive: to harvest, garden, ferment, preserve, cook, and eat together. It is conceived as a mobile "food lab" where participants experiment with alternative ways of relating to food—ways that are rooted in care, reciprocity, and collective responsibility.

Within this space, knowledge circulates horizontally. Stories, gestures, seeds, and recipes are exchanged alongside reflections on ecological imbalance, extractivism, and systemic injustice. By physically embodying radical sharing, commons-based methodologies, and the reciprocity of local hospitality, the Mobile Food Commons becomes a site of trans-local exchange, weaving together diverse voices, memories, and lived experiences.

Playful and experimental, the project acts as a living laboratory for reactivating ancestral knowledge and renewing bonds with land, water, and more-than-human worlds. It imagines food systems not as isolated infrastructures, but as relational ecosystems—central to struggles for climate justice, ecological repair, and collective futures.

WHO IS BEHIND THIS LEARNING SPACE?

Broudou School is a collective and multidisciplinary learning environment based in Tunis, devoted to artistic research at the intersections of ecology, agriculture, and food. Its members are from Tunisia and Austria; Aziza Gorgi, Cyrine Ghrissi, Emily Sarsam, Raouia Briki, Mary Sarsam, and Sarra Bouzgarrou. The school emerged after three years of independent research and publishing through BROUDOU, a publication series exploring food as a political, cultural, and embodied practice. From decolonial, ecological, queer, and feminist perspectives, Broudou School explores the future of food as a space of resistance, care, and imagination.

Working alongside artists, researchers, farmers, and local communities, the collective organizes workshops, field trips, experimental residencies, and food-based encounters in collaboration with Mouhit, an artist residency and project space in Tunis. The learning platform acts as a meeting point bridging theory, creative practice, and embodied learning, connecting people across geographies who face similar challenges around food sovereignty and social justice.

HOW DOES THE COLLECTIVE ORGANIZE ITSELF?

Broudou School is formed by a core group of six members, with an open structure that invites others into discussion and project development.

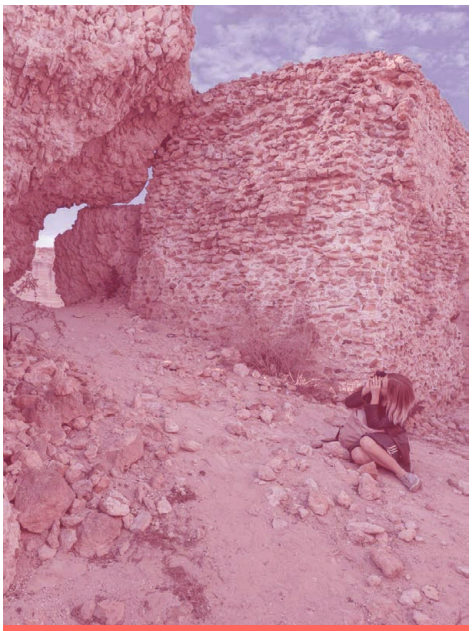
The collective operates through rotating roles: facilitation, documentation, coordination, and financial care circulate among members. Shared values and key thematic interests guide the work, while both long-term visions and short-term goals are collectively defined. The initiative began as fully collaborative projects and gradually evolved to include individual research paths, while maintaining a strong culture of mutual support and shared responsibility.

Challenges such as limited time and reduced meeting frequency have emerged over time. While the collective functioned more actively in its early stages, the absence of a clearly defined long-term schedule affected continuity. Nevertheless, the core values and collaborative spirit remain central.

Emily Sarsam

Cyrine Ghrissi

Raouia Briki



Mary Sarsam

Sara Bouzgarrou

Workshop at SOC Gathering: Wetlands Recipes 1

WHAT WAS SHARED AT THE SCHOOL OF COMMONS GATHERING?

Broudou School was represented at the School of Commons gathering in Zurich (July 2026) by Cyrine Ghrissi, a Tunisian art curator and collective member.

The gathering was marked by a welcoming atmosphere, bringing together people from diverse disciplines who shared common values. Collective cooking, working, and eating together created fertile ground for exchange and co-design.

Workshop: Wetlands Recipes

Cyrine facilitated a participatory workshop inviting participants to recall personal memories connected to wetlands. Working in six small groups, participants identified water bodies from memory, explored wetland flora, and selected one plant to collectively create a recipe inspired by their chosen ecosystem and cultural backgrounds.

The workshop resulted in six food and drink recipes, accompanied by performative presentations. Shared values and task distribution were established from the beginning, highlighting the collective process as a central element. The workshop reflected one of Broudou School's ongoing interests: understanding how groups work together, and how collective processes can be sustained.

More details about the workshop:

Wetland Plants, Collective Recipes & Food Sovereignty is a one-hour participatory workshop exploring wetlands as shared commons and sources of food sovereignty. Beginning with an introduction to Broudou School and related materials, the session frames wetlands as biodiverse, resilient landscapes often misrepresented as wastelands, yet vital for climate mitigation, refuge, and care. Through guided discussion, participants reflect on commoning landscapes and the role of wild wetland plants as neglected but nutritionally and medicinally rich resources. The core activity invites participants to collectively map a wetland they feel connected to, select a local plant, and create a recipe inspired by its properties and their own cultural food traditions, illustrated and written on postcards. The workshop concludes with a sharing circle where participants present their recipes and stories, weaving connections between ecology, cultural memory, survival, and resistance, and ends with a collective reflection and the creation of a temporary shared archive of knowledge.

Workshop at SOC Gathering: Wetlands Recipes 2

Workshop at SOC Gathering: Wetlands Recipes 3

WHAT CONTINUES BEYOND THE GATHERING?

Following the School of Commons gathering, Broudou School expanded its network and forms of exchange. New relationships and shared interests emerged with Sala de Té, (d)estructura, and Glacier Rapport.

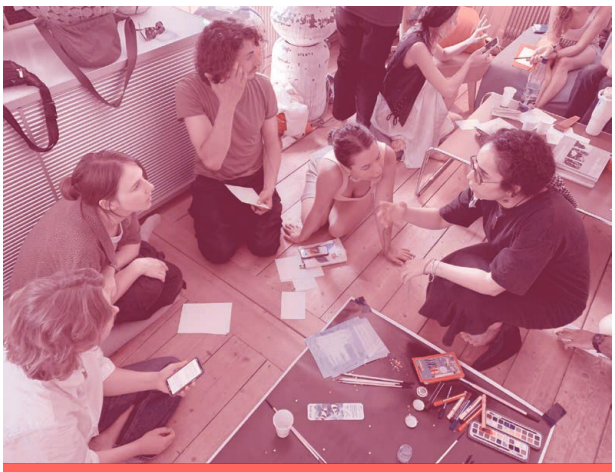
Glacier Rapport invited Broudou School to present photographic material from Broudou Magazine, including two editions focused on olive oil and bread, and to host a workshop as part of the exhibition Fluten Weimar, curated by Giuliana Marmo.

Besides this, the sharing of food together to experiment in different lands, like Harina de Chontaduro, was exchanged from Mariangela, (d)estructura member, in Colombia, to Broudou School in Tunis.

Dialogue, collaboration, and shared research continue to shape the project's next steps and sustain the bond between SoC different members and participants.

WHAT SUPPORTS COLLECTIVE WORK OVER TIME?

- Collective Organization
- Identify and revisit core values
- Develop long-term plans alongside clear actions
- Define and rotate roles
- Establish a consistent meeting calendar
- Work Process
- Integrate evaluation throughout the process
- Assign responsibility for tracking progress
- Recognize collective work as sustained labor
- Working With Communities
- Involve communities in project design
- Prepare through research and contextual understanding
- Collaborate with experts and local knowledge holders
- Share knowledge as a collective resource



Workshop at SOC Gathering: Wetlands Recipes 4

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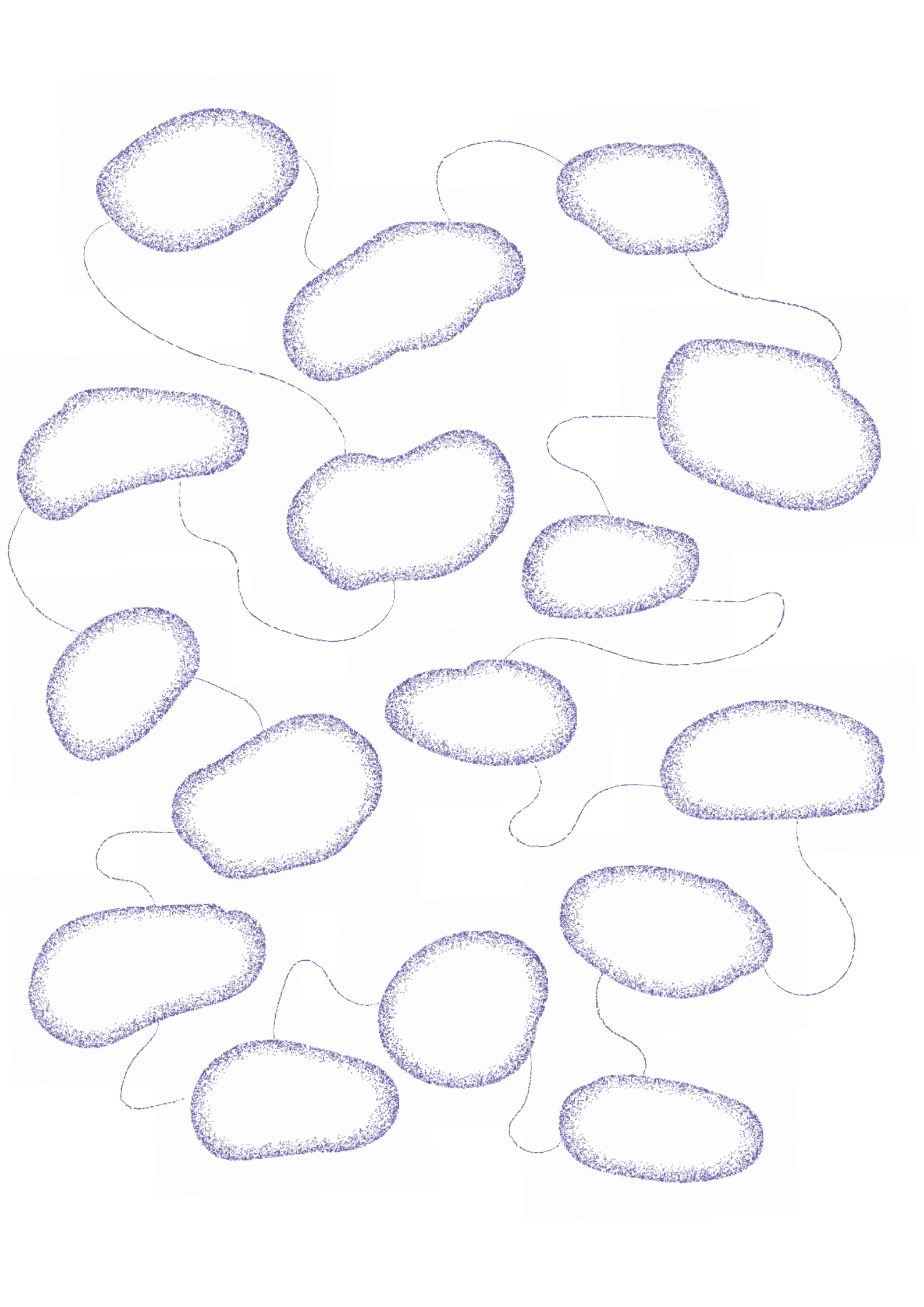
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